Marvel/DC Crossover: Special Report

WIZARD

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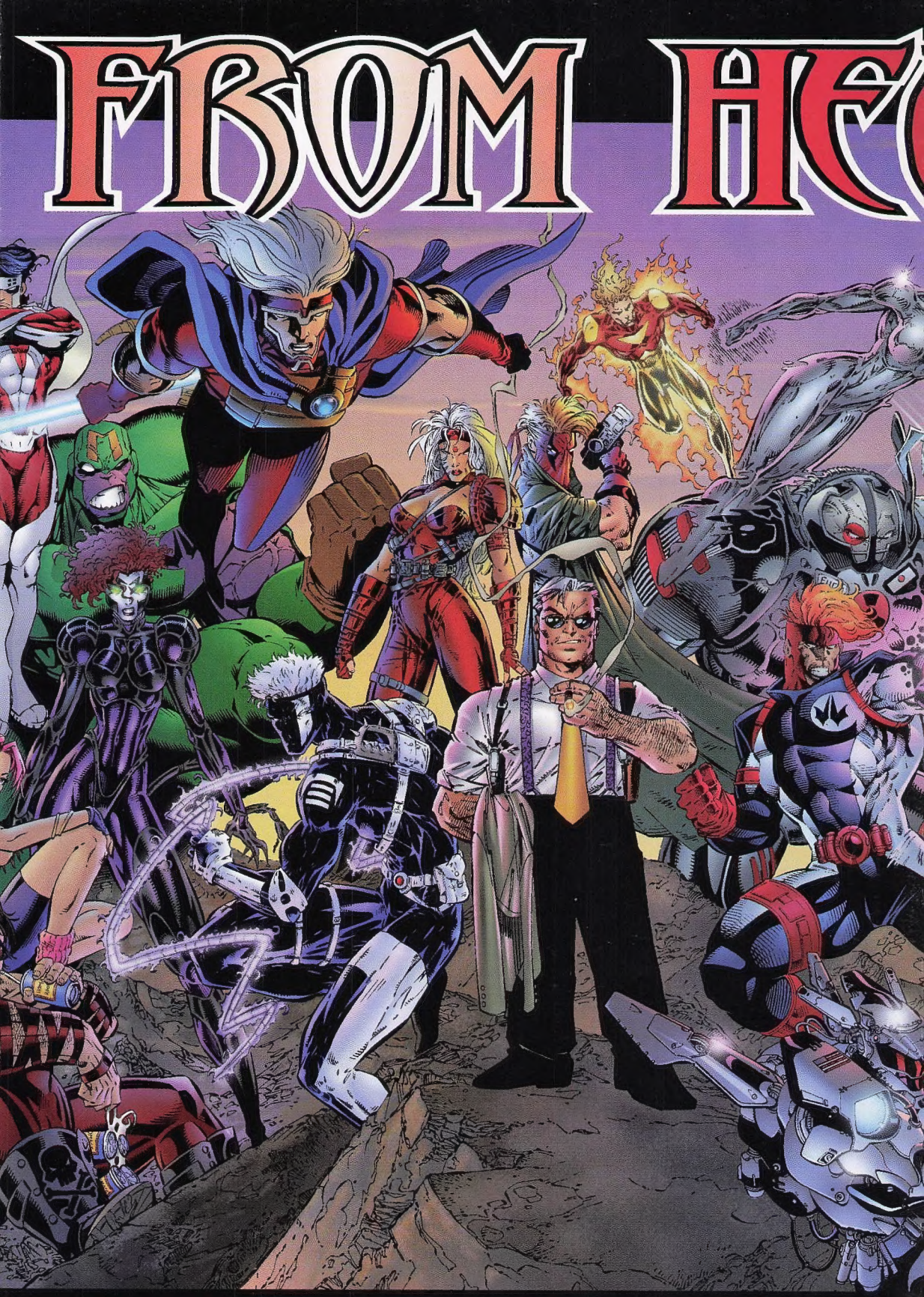

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March:
Sword of Damocles #1
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WildC.A.T.S #29
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Sigma #3
WildC.A.T.S #30
Deathblow #28
Fire From Heaven #2

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Number 54
FEBRUARY 1996

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IT'S MARVEL VS. DC! IN MORE WAYS THAN ONE. PAGE 48

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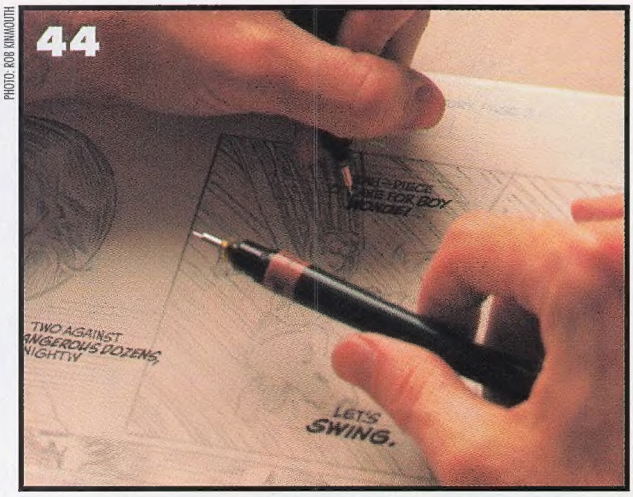

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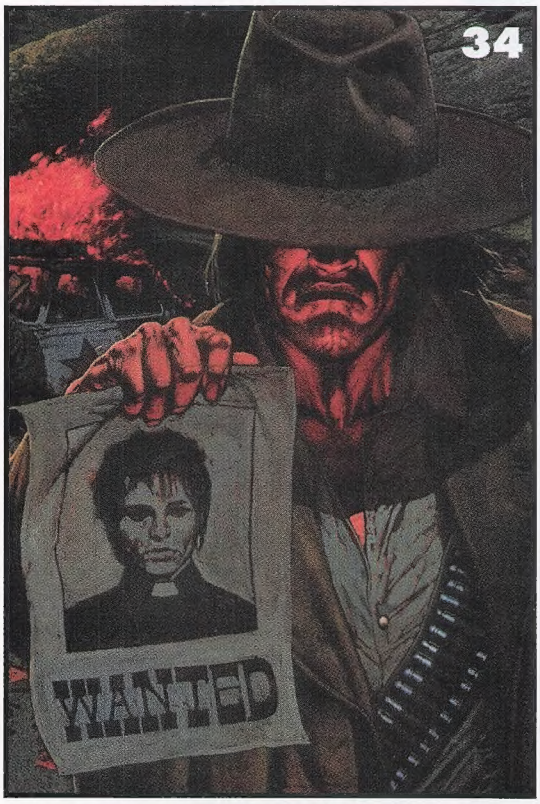

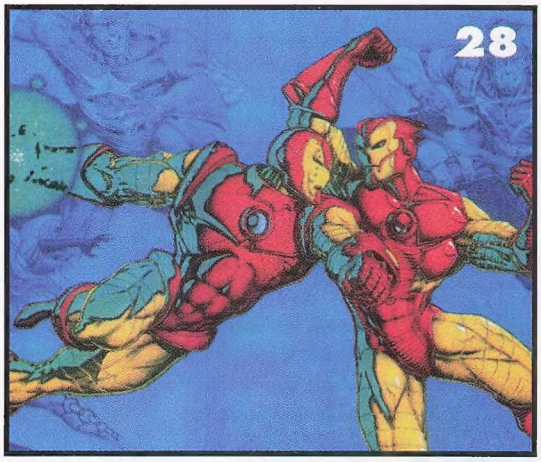

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from the top...

THE ITSY-BITSY SPIDER WENT UP THE WATER SPOUT, DOWN CAME THE RAIN AND WASHED THE SPIDER OUT...

Paul Schiraldi

GET BOARD!

We wanted to have some more fun this month so we're giving you *Wizard: The Board Game*; we created a double-sided board featuring Milk & Cheese on one side and Madman on the other. Both sides come complete with their own rules on them. I have already stayed up way past my bedtime playing and laughing my butt off.

The comic book industry is having a major face-off between Marvel and DC. Bart Sears was able to do an incredible battle scene for us. Make sure you fill out your ballot—mine is already in, but I'm not telling who I voted for because I wasn't politically correct with my choices!

We've been able to kick off this year with lots of new editorial features, the first of which I've never seen anywhere before in comics: an Autograph Price Guide. So if you were wondering about what you've got, look it up! Make sure you read the criteria of why an autograph is worth what it's worth—it might surprise you.

We've got some great plans for the new year. We're doing lots of #1/2 offers, lots of new features, more toy stuff, Wizard World Online, more *Wizard* special editions and tons of new fun. Make sure you write me and let me know what you think.

Keep in touch. See you next month.

Gareb S. Shamus

P.S. Next month we've got an awesome *Vampirella* #1/2, so check it out!

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VAMPIRES. NO INTERVIEWS.

FROM ROBERT RODRIGUEZ FROM QUENTIN TARANTINO

FROM DUSK TILL DAWN

A BAND APART

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FEBRUARY 2ND EVERYWHERE

MAGIC WORDS

Letters About Letters About Letters

So ya say ya wanna know the big letter topics this month? Well, we're still getting tons of letters in response to the "Star Trek"-bashing letter in issue #48's "Magic Words" and the responses that we ran in issue #52. Legions of "Star Wars" fans and truckloads of Trekkies (Excuse me? Oh, sorry—make that "Trekkers.") have written in to express their opinions of which they think is best. Early returns? Looks like we have a greater number of "Star Trek" supporters out there.

Another big letter topic has been Jesse Corvino's universally hated letter (issue #46) and Enrique García's response (issue #50). García's letter made sense to me, but wasn't all too popular with many of our readers. As witness:

Talkin' 'Bout My Generation

All-Powerful, Omnipresent Wizard,

In your spectacular 50th issue, Enrique García wrote a letter in response to an earlier letter from Jesse Corvino. It was one of the most obnoxious letters I have ever seen in your magazine. Mr. García complains that the current generation of kids does not appreciate the finer things in life. Because one uneducated kid does not appreciate the importance of classic literature such as that from Homer or Goethe, Mr. García refers to this entire generation as the "moron generation." Frankly, I'm pissed.

I am an 18-year-old college student attending West Virginia Tech studying to be a civil engineer. I draw, read books, collect comics and occasionally play video games on the side. I have found that in this world, people are different. Just because a person does not like what you do, that does not make them a moron. I love Homer's *The Odyssey*. I am also a big fan of "Beavis and Butt-Head," *Spawn*, *The Maxx*, *Ghost Rider* and *The Punisher*. I believe that Pearl Jam sucks and that Mozart was a great composer. However, I enjoy Sponge, Stone Temple Pilots and Green Day a lot more than classical music. I appreciate the tastes of others, even though I may not necessarily like them myself.

We, the under-20 crowd, are not a generation of morons who read stupid comic books, listen to crappy music and shine a flashlight in one ear and watch as the light shines out the other. Mr. García should not judge an entire generation on the idiotic remarks of a single person.

Robert Burnham
Montgomery, WV

Just goes to show you: Different strokes for different folks. Taste is a subjective thing. When you compare works in any form of art—be it literature, movies, music or even comics—is any one thing really "better" or "worse" than anything else in its field?

Sure it is. In your opinion. And sometimes your opinion is that those who don't share your opinions are a bunch of morons. Nothing wrong with having an opinion, or with taking exception with someone else's, as long as you've got good reasons for it.

By the way, Robert's no moron—Pearl Jam does indeed suck.

Buckle Up

Dear Wizard,

Like everyone else, I believed that Apocalypse first appeared in *X-Factor* #6, published in 1986. I found out today that this was false.

Today I picked up *Uncanny X-Men* #119. In the middle of the X-Men's fight with Moses Magnum, there is a flashback that shows how Magnum got his powers. Magnum fell into a volcano, but he didn't hit the bottom. Instead, he woke up on a laboratory table with a big guy with an "A" on his belt standing above him. The big guy says, "I am Apocalypse." Check it out on page 13, panel 4 if you want.

Uncanny X-Men #119 was published in 1979, a full seven years before *X-Factor* #6. Am I right about this or am I seeing things?

Walter Dawson
Fort Wayne, IN

You're seeing things. Apocalypse is not exactly in* Uncanny X-Men *#119. Apocalypse does show up in* Classic X-Men *#25, which reprints* Uncanny *#119 with some extra panels added to beef up a shadowy appearance from a mystery character later

THESE LETTERS ARE GUARANTEED HAND-PICKED FOR FRESHNESS

THERE IS NO CURE.

CONTAGION

AN 11-PART STORY
FEATURED IN:

AZRAEL #15 - #16

BATMAN #529

BATMAN:
SHADOW OF THE BAT
#48 - #49

CATWOMAN #31 - #32

DETECTIVE COMICS
#695 - #696

ROBIN #27 - #28

PLUS: THE BATMAN
CHRONICLES #4

THE DISEASE
STARTS
SPREADING
IN JANUARY.

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revealed to be Apocalypse. You either read Classic #25 or you're on crack.

But what a spiffy belt buckle! I think I'll open a 24-hour Supervillain Giant Initial Belt Buckle Shop. I'd make a mint. Bad guys just don't know how to accessorize.

I Didn't Do It! Honest!

Dear Wizard,

I think you should know the story behind Shi's sixth finger (as shown in *Wizard* #51's "Magic Words"). All I can say is that there must be a conspiracy going on between *Wizard* and Event Comics' Jimmy Palmiotti. I did not draw six fingers. But when Jimmy inked it, Shi came out with a sixth!

Billy Tucci
Crusade Entertainment Ltd.
Rego Park, NY

We called Palmiotti to get his side of the story. He replied, "I added an extra finger? Are you kidding? When I got the cover, there were nine fingers, a passport and a hamburger. I did Tucci a favor." Tucci has since redrawn the piece for the cover of the second edition of the Shi trade paperback.

Will the Real Thor Please Stand Up

Dear Wizard,

I'm a total mythology freak, so I couldn't help but notice your item on Thor's hammer on page 10 of *Wizard* #51.

The first thing I noticed was the spelling of the hammer's name. You spelled it with one "l," but it should have two (*Mjollnir*, not Mjolnir). Some of the hammer's attributes you listed also confused me. Thor's hammer does in fact return to its wielder, but according to myth, anyone strong enough to lift it can wield it. It is not "usable only by those that are worthy."

Another error: The hammer does not have the power to create storms. According to all I have read pertaining to Norse mythology, the reason that Thor is called "God of Thunder" is due to the two giant goats that drive his chariot. The sound of their thundering hooves is what we supposedly hear during a thunderstorm.

I would like to know where you got your information. I gathered my info from seven different Norse mythology books.

Bob Reid
High Point, NC

We got our information from reading Marvel comics, which might not seem as scholarly as seven books worth of Norse myth, but is about as accurate. Stories told in myth often differ from source to source. I'd be willing to wager that there was a lot of contradiction in the seven books that you read. Some sources will tell you that Thor was blonde, others tell you that he had red hair. Marvel, DC and Image Comics all have "Thors," all based on the Norse God of Thunder, and all of whom are very different. Every interpretation picks and chooses which bits of Thordom fit them best. Our write-up on Mjolnir was true to the Marvel version, which bears little resemblance to any other Thor you'll find.

THE BUNNY AWARD

Paul Schiraldi

Jim takes one of his favorite letters of the month and spotlights it here. There's no logic attached to this nor is there a prize.

'Scuse Me While I Kiss This Guy

Dear Wizard,

I got hopped up out of my mind on Rock-A-Dile Red Kool-Aid and listened to the old Spider-Man cartoon theme song. Here's what I heard:

"Cider man, King Kong fan/Yell at kids till they scram/Grabs a glass any size/Catches disease from fruit flies/Uggghhn! [James Brown imitation here] Here comes the slide-rule man!

"Was she wrong?/I drink Bud/In Ohio, there's lots of floods/Can she sing to some bread?/Kill a skunk till it's dead/Mayday! There goes the Culligan Man!

"As we go out tonight/It's tequila, salt and lime/When drunk, we fight/Uh-oh! 4 a.m. is the time!

"Slide-Rule Man, pork chop Spam/Check out the blonde with the tropical tan/Welcome home/Now you're bored/Blonde was hot, should of scored!

"Gas station is where we fill up/Now all your friends have thrown up/That's the life of a *Wizard* fan!"

Those the right words?

Frank Krul
strat@proton.com

Sounds good to me. I gotta latch on to some of that Rock-A-Dile Red stuff. Sounds a lot better than yoo-hoo.

Time to Make the donuts...er...Wizards

Dear Wizard,

How long does it take to make a *Wizard*? Do you like making them? Or is it a thing where you say, "I can't wait for this to be over"? Just wondering.

Layton Diament
Dayton, NV

Since Wizard is a monthly magazine, it takes about one month to put together each issue. Not everything is done on the same schedule, however. Feature articles may be done months in advance, and we often hold news item space until the last minute to make the magazine as timely as possible.

The whole publishing process is kinda fun, but like any job, can sometimes be a righteous pain in the ass. We have our good months and our bad months but I think that overall, we like what we do.

Sit Down and Shut Up, Punk!

Dear Wizard,

Is it just me, or does this whole Marvel/DC crossover seem to be a shameless attempt on the part of Marvel and DC to discover which company is better? I think that Marvel and DC are only doing this because they want to find out what readers think of their characters so they can

fix them up and make them better. How can you possibly believe that Marvel and DC are getting together out of the goodness of their hearts? To Marvel and DC I say: Shame on you!

To the readers who will participate in this travesty by voting for which characters they want to see win, I say this: Don't vote seriously! Create chaos! Vote for the wrong heroes! Mess up the system! We'll show them that they can't manipulate us into serving their interests!

To the glorious folks at *Wizard*, I say this: Please print this! Everyone must know of this sham and heed my words well! Thank you.

JWalerko@aol.com

Boy, are you a boob. The crossover is one damn cool idea. This is exactly what every comic fan has been waiting for ever since they were 10 years old. Think about it—haven't you spent hours with your friends discussing just what would happen if Batman were to fight Captain America? Well here it is. And the best part of all is that the fans get to determine who wins! The outcome of the battles are not subject to the whim of the writer. WE get to decide. What could be better?

To the readers who will participate in this monumental event by voting for which characters they want to see win, I say this: Go for broke. Have fun. Cast your ballot. Hell, pretend you're in Chicago and cast a dozen ballots. Vote for whom you'd like to see win and good luck to 'em.

To any nay-sayers out there like ol' "JWalerko@aol.com," I say this: Sit down and shut up.

Ask Dr. Science

O Great and Wise Purveyors of Magic Words,

1) Is the fact that Prime's superhero body is composed of a fluid substance a farcical attempt to prove the theories of the Grecian philosopher Thales?

2) When a shape-shifter such as Changeling or Chameleon Boy changes into a form with a larger mass than his own, where does the extra mass come from? And when they choose a smaller form, where does that mass go?

3) Who's right about merchandising and profit sharing—Jerry Jones or the National Football League?

4) When the Invisible Woman is invisible, how does she see? Since vision depends on light passing into the eye and striking certain areas of the eyeball, shouldn't she be effectively blinded?

Vince Rohn
Jacksonville, IL

1) For those of you who aren't Greek freaks, Thales of Miletus was a mathematician who lived in the late seventh and early sixth centuries B.C. He theorized that water was the basic building block of all matter, and that all things originated in water. But Prime's body has little to do with Thales' teachings. Says Prime co-creator Len Strazewski, "Actually, [co-writer] Gerard Jones and I are more into Eastern metaphysics than classical Greek philosophy. So while we are aware of Thales' theories, we did not base Prime's body on his observations." Oh, those comic writers! What intellectual scamps!

2) The general theory is that there's this big ol' parallel dimension that beings like this access without their even thinking about it. Extra mass is stored there for them to use when they get bigger, and they stash their extra bulk there when they get smaller. Sure, it's a reach of an explanation, but these are comic books we're talking about.

3) The NFL.

4) Whoa! Another question so difficult that we had to appeal to Marvel Comics Archivist Peter Sanderson. Quoth Mr. Sanderson: "The Invisible Woman psionically controls the bending of light. When she's invisible, she bends the light around her. Since she controls the effect, she can allow light to penetrate her eyes without disrupting the invisibility effect. Therefore, she can see. And she does it all subconsciously, without even having to think about it."

Periodic Table

Dear Wizard,

Is Adamantium a real metal? 'Cause it's not in the encyclopedia.

Ai Mie Too and Glen Waverley
Melbourne, Australia

Nope. There ain't no such animal in the real world. Adamantium is only found in the Marvel Universe. But come on—is your name really "Ai Mie Too"? What a great moniker! I could have a lot of fun with a name like that! Imagine this exchange: "Hey! Anyone else going to the movies?" "Ai! Mie Too! Wait up, I'll be there in a minute!" What fun!

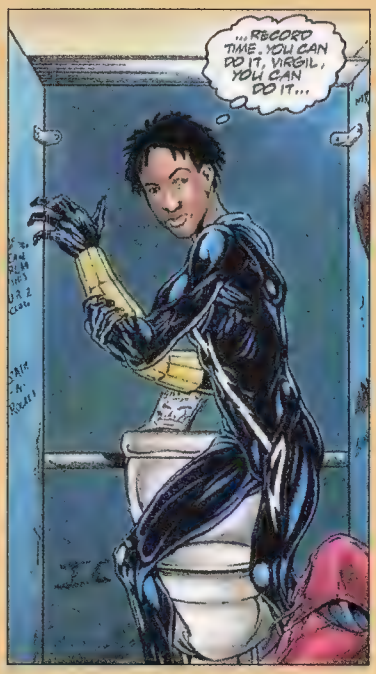
You Said It

Dear Wizard,

In his "E.G.O." column in issue #49, Todd McFarlane said he's "a little bit terrified of dying." Why? Dying isn't bad. Unless you were a total ass in life, you're happy for eternity.

Philip Rodrigues
Antioch, CA

No comment.



In a Minute, I'm on the Can

Dear Jim,

In response to Andy Deck's letter in issue #51 inquiring about the bathroom habits of superheroes, I offer some valuable information.

Despite the fact that both *Kobalt* and *Xombi* are now canceled, I think that when I was writing the two books, I may have set the record for most references to bodily functions of comic book characters, although I like to think that this is not the sole merit of either title.

Kobalt #1 introduces us to Page, the young sidekick, as he is being beaten by bullies in a boy's room at school.

In *Kobalt* #7, Page and Static meet for the first time when emerging from adjacent stalls in that same boy's room.

In *Kobalt* #4, one of Kobalt's hostages visibly wets himself.

In *Kobalt* #10, the witness to an execution

Hey! It's Pen Pals

Get in touch with your fellow comic fans! Send your name, address, age, gender and three favorite titles to Pen Pals, c/o the Magic Words address on page 12. **NOTE: Please write your age clearly on the envelope.** Hey, make a friend!

P E N P A L S

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Ridgewood, NY 11385
Likes: *Vampirella, Spider-Man*

is concerned over the strength of his bladder. It proves to be not strong enough.

Finally, *Kobalt* #14 features two—count 'em, two—scenes in which regular (no pun intended) members of the cast visit the john. One of these scenes is an exploration of the problem of wearing a complicated costume when you really need to go.

Xombi #0 introduces us to the title character, David Ki, as he discusses how his powers have negated the need for him to go at all.

In *Xombi* #1, a visit to the women's room and the flushing of a toilet play crucial roles in the story.

In *Xombi* #8, supporting cast member Julian Parker takes a leak while delivering exposition.

In *Xombi* #15, feces left behind from a group of monsters provide a vital clue.

It was never my purposeful intent to include a plethora of scenes pertaining to the process of elimination (Hey, what a great title for a future bathroom article!). In fact, I only realized how many instances there were because someone commented to me on how the two bathroom scenes in *Kobalt* #14 were probably a comics first. This comment was made the day before your magazine came out, and after seeing Deck's letter, I decided to catalog the scenes I came across. I guess I just want the characters to seem like real people, and it's also a convenient way to get a character out of a room. I think it was Mickey Spillane who advised sending in two guys with guns whenever you get stuck in a scene. Me? I just send someone to the bathroom.

John Rozum
New York, NY

Hey, whatever works. If sending someone to the bathroom moves (Oooh! Scatological humor!) the story along, so be it. Everyone out in Reader Land can follow the continuing bathroom adventures of Rozum-written characters in Hardware from Milestone Media.

¡Madre Dios!

Dear Wizard,

In *Uncanny X-Men* #325, Colossus says, "Boize Moi!" What does that mean?

Scott Galord
Santa Ana, CA

Good question. I called writer/artist and linguistic guy Howard Chaykin, whose character Reuben Flagg used the variation "Bojemoi!" about a billion times in his critically acclaimed American Flagg! series. "I use it in lieu of 'Great Scott!' or 'Oh, my God!' It's a Russian expression of surprise," said Chaykin. Due to the fact that the Russian language employs a different alphabet than English (Cyrillic versus Arabic), either spelling is acceptable.

Stamps of Approval

Dear Wizards,

October was national stamp month both in the United States as well as here in Canada. Canada Post issued five superhero stamps to celebrate the occasion. I thought you might like a set of these stamps as well as a brief history of these Canadian characters.

The most recognizable character is Superman. Although not a Canadian character, he was co-created by Toronto-born artist Joe Shuster.

Captain Canuck, another recognizable hero, first appeared in his self-titled comic in July 1975. Created by Richard Comely and Ron Leishman, the Captain had no superpowers. He used his brain, not his fists, to fight his foes.

Nelvana of the Northern Lights was our first national hero. She was created in 1941 by Adrian Dingle and debuted in *Triumph-Adventure Comics* in August of that year.

Canada's second national hero was Johnny Canuck. He was created by 16-year-old Leo Bachle. Johnny first appeared in *Dime Comics* #1 in February 1942. He did not have superpowers, but fought the Axis as an Air Force captain and secret agent.

Fleur de Lys was the Quebecois partner of Northguard. She debuted in *The New Triumph Featuring Northguard* in 1984. This gutsy gal was a martial arts expert.

Todd Klacko
Port Colborne, Ontario, Canada

Hey, now! Those look pretty cool. They definitely blow away the "Little Orphan Annie" stamp available in the United States. Come to think of it, Canada blows away the U.S. in terms of cool-looking stamps, cool-looking money and quality of donuts. Any philatelic (Look it up!) comic fans out there can latch on to these stamps by dropping by your local stamp store.

We Looked It Up

Dark•seid (dark•side) *DC Universe* 1 Dictator of the planet Apokolips; one of the strongest beings in the Universe, Darkseid is not only nearly invulnerable but he possesses the ability to shoot beams from his eyes (see Omega Effect) which lock on to their target and follow it wherever it goes, eventually doing one of three things: disintegrating its target, teleporting the target through time and space, or resurrecting disintegrated beings 2 Recently fought his son Orion, who detonated an ancient artifact that supposedly killed Darkseid 3 The evil force that lured Anakin Skywalker over and turned him into Darth Vader

Pay no attention to the Man Behind the Curtain!

Dear Wizard,

Do you guys realize that you run the comic industry? Take a look. You did a story on Neal Adams and the next month, everything he worked on increased in value. You did a story on Trent Kaniuga and now everyone is nuts about him.

By the way, how do you pronounce "Kaniuga"? And what does Marc Wilkofsky do in his spare time?

Matthew Brewster
Knoxville, PA

We run the comic industry? Damn straight,

P E N P A L S

Jennifer Rivera
Age: 16 Sex: Female
2966 Briggs Ave., Apt. 6B
Bronx, NY 10458
Likes: *X-Men, X-Man, Superman*

Shannonh Robertson
Age: 19 Sex: Female
3824 S.W. 41st Street
Oklahoma City, OK 73119
Likes: *Lady Death, Gen 13, Dawn*

Ghislain Wachowiak
Age: 25 Sex: Male
34, Rue Alexandre Ribot
63000 Clermont Ferrand, France
Likes: *John Byrne's Next Men*, all X-titles, all Spider-titles

Keegan Buckingham
Age: 13 Sex: Male
1645 335th Street
Brighton, IA 52540
Likes: *Bone, Wolverine, Generation X*

Shawn McInnish
Age: 14 Sex: Male
12338 Allison Road
Geismar, LA 70734
Likes: *Spawn, X-Men*, Spider-Man titles

Johnnie Solis
Age: 23 Sex: Male
HHB 4-29 FA
Unit 23737 Box 665
APO AE 09034
Likes: All Mutant titles, *Silver Surfer*

Angelique Cobb
Age: 26 Sex: Female
2634 SE Kelly St.-A
Portland, OR 97202
Likes: All X-titles, *Elementals, Lady Death*

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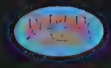

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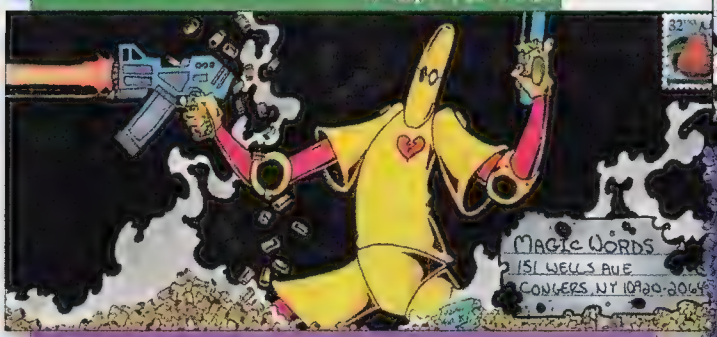
LETTER ART

Fans who get their letter art printed will each receive a copy of *Guy Gardner: Warrior* #0 signed by Beau Smith, an issue of *X-Men* signed by Andy Kubert, the issue of *Wizard* in which their envelope appeared signed by the entire *Wizard* creative staff, and a funky *Wizard* cap! The creator of the best envelope wins all that neat stuff, *plus* an original *X-Force* page by *Adam Pollina*. Artists: please include a clearly printed return address on the **back** of your envelope. And special thanks to Adam for donatin' that swell Grand Prize!

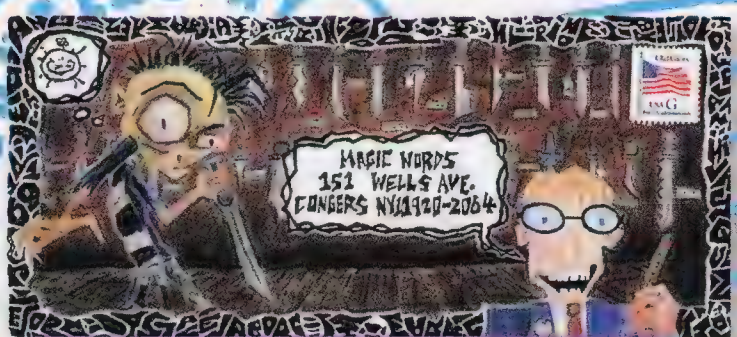
envelope of the month



SCUD Josh Shelby

SANDMAN Bao-Khang Luu

X-FILES Justin Knight



JOHNNY Tina Racinez

buddy. Bow and prostrate before us! Kiss our feet! Lavish us with luxurious gifts and deep-fried baked goods to gain our favor! You have no choice if you want to be a player in this biz!

But seriously, folks, we don't run jack. I'm sure we have some influence, but it's relatively minor. If we do an article on a little known newcomer (like in the case of Kaniuga), it probably helps them a bit by increasing their exposure. In the case of an established vet like Neal Adams, their rep is already made. Adams is 53 times more influential and larger in stature than Wizard. *Our influence is hit-and-miss at best.*

I like to pronounce "Kaniuga" like that cool sound effect you hear in submarine movies when everything goes haywire. You know, the ship's sinking, the captain is firing forward torpedoes, red lights are flashing and you hear that loud "ka-NEEG-wa! ka-NEEG-wa!" Actually, it's a German name pronounced "ka-noog-ah."

Our snugly editor Marc Wilkofsky is quite a busy guy. He says that in his spare time he likes to "follow the entertainment world and go dancing or to parties to make it look like I'm sorta social." Marc is also the newsletter editor for the online fan club of the TV show "ER." My well placed spies also tell me that Wilko has recently been seen making goat cheese, feeling up midgets, hanging upside down in his closet, manufacturing red ink for all the superfluous commas he puts in his proofs and blinding himself...gradually.

And there's way too little time in my schedule these days. So I'm going to take my one-month-per-year off from the letters column next issue. Your jovial "Magic Words" host next month will actually be a hostess—Kathy Newman, my promotions partner-in-crime. Newman (as she is affectionately know around the office) stands ready to handle your questions, your comments, your concerns, your complaints and your prison pen-pal letters. But go easy on her, huh?

Until issue #56, I remain...

Jim McLauchlin

Jim McLauchlin once seriously thought about moving to British Columbia and becoming a lumberjack. Instead, he went to college.

Send letters to:
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151 Wells Ave.
Congers, NY 10920
or e-mail us at WizardTGTC@AOL.Com

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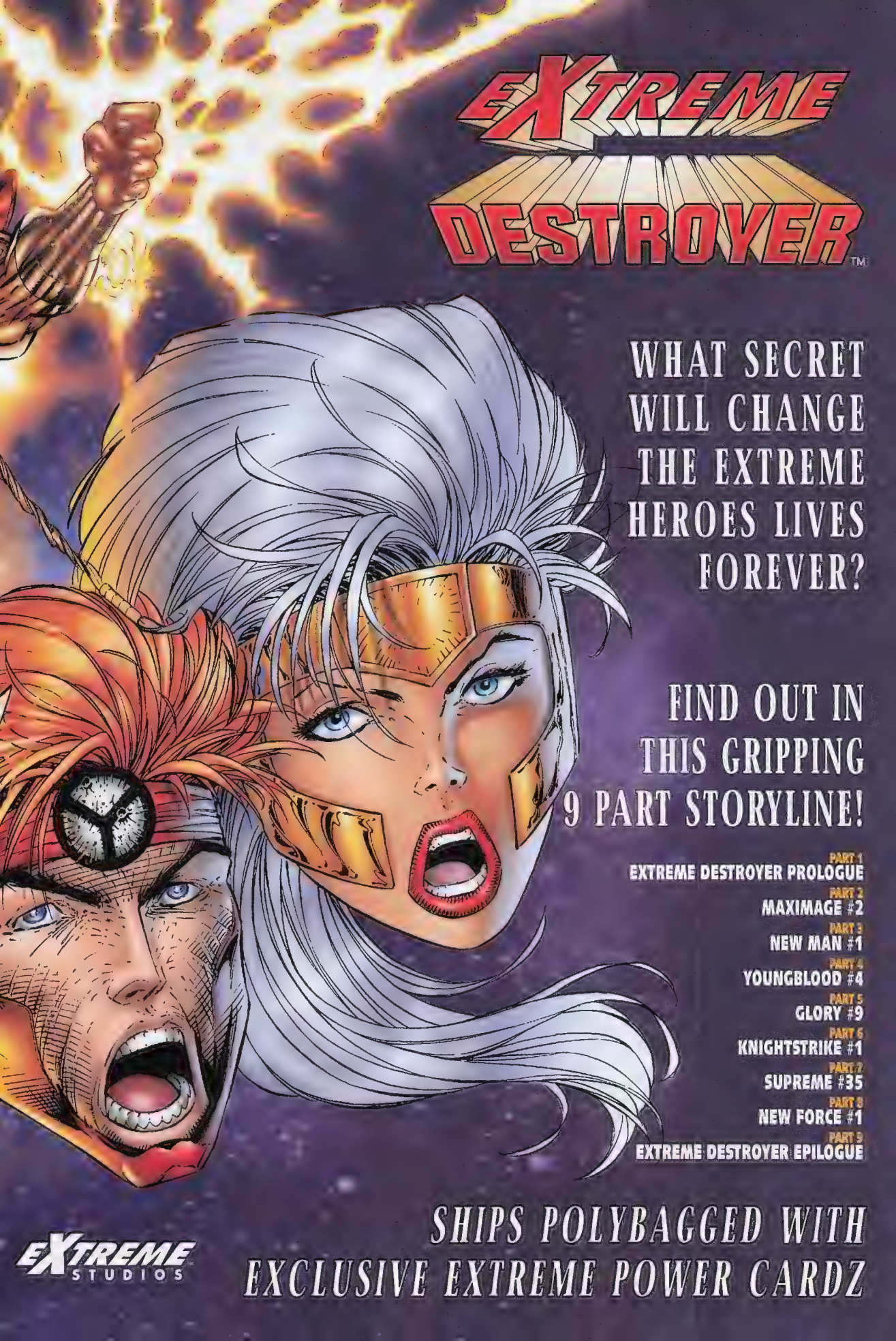
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POLICE RAID COMIC SHOPS in Oklahoma and Florida

Long bathroom lines at comic-con shatter records. "Good thing I brought extra socks, though I don't remember eating all that corn..." sighed caped fanboy.

New Disney star has stockholders worried. "Ten bucks says I bag that mermaid chick before noon!" exclaimed Brick, The Surly Midget.

Satan sighted at local con. "Where's that Liefeld boy at? He owes me BIG!" bellowed unholy lord of all things moist and scabby.

Two store owners are scheduled to be tried on a variety of charges in January, in connection with the distribution and/or display of comic books found objectionable by law enforcement officials in Oklahoma City.

The incident comes on the heels of a police action in St. Petersburg, Fla., in November, in which no arrests were made, but a store owner was ordered to remove material "suggestive in nature" from open access areas.

In Oklahoma City, Planet Comics owners John Hunter and Michael Kennedy face an eight-count indictment and are scheduled to appear in court on January 26. They face charges including distribution of obscene materials and displaying materials harmful to minors (both for ***Verotika*** #4), selling obscene materials (specifically, *Verotika* #4, plus **Boneyard Press**' *Mighty Morphing Rump Rangers* and Japan Books' *Viper Series Official Art Book*), trafficking in obscene materials (for the Eros comics *Beatrix Dominatrix*, *Nefarismo*, *Screamers* and *Sex Wad*, all published by **Fantagraphics**), and one count of child pornography for Frank Thorne's *Devil's Angel*, also published by Eros/Fantagraphics.

Unsuitable for public viewing? Suggestive in nature?

If convicted on all counts, the two men could face jail terms of as much as 86 years, plus $100,000 in fines. They were evicted from their store after the arrests, and had to find a new location to do business.

In August 1995, the Oklahoma City Vice Squad received an anonymous complaint regarding the comic *Verotika* #4, published by rocker **Glenn Danzig**'s Verotik Press. The comic contained a story written by **Hart D. Fisher** entitled "A Taste of Cherry," in which a teenage girl is raped, tortured and eventually killed, all while being videotaped. An undercover officer bought a copy of the book in question and showed it to District Court Judge Dan Owens, who ruled in September that the book was obscene and deemed it probable cause to issue a search warrant empowering the police to confiscate *Verotika* and any other "comic books, magazines, video tapes or other materials which contain acts of sexual intercourse, normal or perverted, fellatio or anal sodomy, with one or more of the same or opposite sex."

Fantagraphics publisher **Gary Groth** expressed his outrage over the bust.

"We consider the arrest of two comic book store retailers a contemptible abuse of government power." Groth and Frank Thorne specifically took exception to the characterization of *Devil's Angel* as child pornography, pointing out that the character in question is quite clearly meant to be a demon spawn.

The police action taken in St. Petersburg in November at Tyrone's Baseball Cards and Comics, stopped short of arrests but involved comics which would generally be considered much tamer than those seized in Oklahoma City.

The Pinellas County Sheriff's Department received a complaint that a child had obtained a copy of the Fantagraphics-published *Naughty Bits*, and was informed that Tyrone's had sold the comic. (According to owner Perry Solomon, Tyrone's never carried that title.) Detective Jennifer Waters visited the store undercover and, while she did not find any *Naughty Bits*, took particular notice of Image's ***Gen***^{13} #5, the ***Lady Death Lingerie Special*** published by Chaos!, and the DC/Vertigo trade paperback of ***Death: The High Cost of Living***, specifically the AIDS-awareness flyer "Death Talks About Life" by Neil Gaiman and Dave McKean which is reprinted in that volume. She told the store manager that it was illegal to display these books in an open-access area, directed that they be removed from the stands and threatened arrests if they were not. She classified these three items as "suggestive in nature" and unsuitable for public display.

Pinellas County is the venue where underground cartoonist Mike Diana was convicted of publishing bscene material in 1994. ■

Paul J. Grant

ahead

MARVEL/DC MERGE!

MARVEL'S NEW ED.-IN-CHIEF!

THE NEW SIN CITY!

WORLDS COLLIDE!

Marvel and DC Merge Their Universes into One

Ever wish Wolverine and Batman were the same guy? Or Superman and Captain America? Or if the X-Men and Justice League combined into one team?

Dare to dream, because it looks like it's going to happen.

Marvel Comics and **DC Comics** are merging their respective superhero universes into one in late February, as familiar heroes and villains from both universes are combined to create all-new ones. Based solely on written descriptions, it appears that a few character merges include a **Wolverine/Batman** character called Dark Claw, a **Superman/Captain America** character called Super-Soldier, a **Spider-Man/Superboy** character called Spider-Boy, and more.

The event is so big that Marvel and DC are creating their own comic book line called **Amalgam Comics**, where 12 one-shot issues will be published with the new characters; they will be the *only* superhero comics released by the two publishers that week. Six will be published by Marvel and six by DC, each carrying the Amalgam logo.

Fans should have a blast trying to figure out who's who. You can make the call on what characters have merged by reading this quick rundown on the 12 one-shots:

• ***Legend of the Dark Claw***—Using his adamantium claws and a ferocity driven by old wounds, Dark Claw protects Gotham City with his young partner Jubilee.

• ***Super-Soldier***—Transformed by an experimental infusion of alien DNA, ordinary guy Clark Kent became America's greatest hero of World War II. Revived after a freak accident of suspended animation, he must fight the menaces of the Green Skull and Hydra.

• ***Amazon***—Raised on the island of Themyscira, the weather-wielding mutant Ororo Monroe is a warrior-class Amazon who must battle the very gods she has been raised to worship.

• ***JLX***—Feared by the world they've sworn to protect, this outlaw band of metahumans must find the traitor in their midst. The team includes Mr. X, Apollo, Firebird, Nightcreeper, Wraith, Runaway, Mercury and Mariner.

• ***Assassins***—Fierce enemies and femme fatales Risk and Catsai forge an uneasy alliance to protect the mayor of New Gotham.

• ***Doctor Strangefate***—The universe's Supreme Lord of Order, he alone knows that the Amalgam Universe is a combination of two universes and he wants to preserve this new continuum at any cost.

• ***Spider-Boy***—He's all attitude *and* he sticks to walls! Plus, he gets to fight Bizzarnage and swing with Insect Queen.

• ***Bruce Wayne: Agent of S.H.I.E.L.D.***—Driven by the murder of his parents, billionaire Bruce Wayne builds a political power base to take command of the Amalgam Universe's premier espionage force.

• ***Speed Demon***—When Blaze Allen chants the ancient words "Gone, gone, o' force of man…" he transforms into Etrigan, a leather-clad monster with a flaming face.

• ***Bullets and Bracelets***—Rogue Amazon princess Diana forges an uneasy alliance with the Punisher to battle the menaces of Monarch Jim Rhodes and Thanoseid.

• ***Magneto and the Magnetic Men***—Adapting the technology his mutant-hating brother Will Magnus used to create the Sentinels, Magneto creates five robots to protect his fellow mutants. Each is formed from a different metal powered by the awesome will of Magneto, and they must face Will Magnus' ultimate creation: Sinistron!

• ***X-Patrol***—Red-bearded cyborg Niles Cable leads Amalgam's strangest team consisting of Ferro Man, Shatterstarfire, Beastling, Elasti-Girl and Dial H.U.S.K. They've got to face the threat of the evil Dr. Doomsday.

The 12 one-shots lead into *DC vs. Marvel #4*, shipping March 5, where the fate of the Amalgam Universe is decided. ■ *John B. Lacey*

Dark Claw: a combo of Wolverine and Batman?

WildStorm 'Fire' to Rage in March

WildStorm Studios delves into the origin of the Gen Factor, with the three-month "Fire From Heaven" crossover occurring from March to May, and ventures into the worlds of sci-fi and corrupt government this winter with a pair of new mini-series: *DefCon 4* and *Black Ops*.

"Fire from Heaven," which will span the majority of WildStorm books, will tell readers where Team 7 and Gen[13] get their powers from. "This crossover will blow the lid on International Operations and you'll find out what Craven's been up to all this time," said WildStorm Marketing Director Jeff Mariotte.

The 20-plus-issue crossover begins and ends in two 40-page bookends written by Alan Moore, with #1 penciled by Ryan Benjamin (*Grifter*) and #2 by an artist to be named later. The crossover also introduces the new villain Damocles, "a villain on a Galactus Scale," said Mariotte.

In addition, two new series will be introduced. *Sword of Damocles* is a two-parter written by Warren Ellis and penciled by Randy Green. It deals with Damocles' right-hand man who paves the way for his superior to venture into our world. The three-issue *Sigma*, written by Brandon Choi and penciled by Tomm Coker (*Gen[13]/Maxx*), deals with a new character crucial to the crossover.

• "*DefCon 4*," said writer Mariotte, "is kind of a departure for WildStorm," set in a nasty future in which technology enables people to replace body parts at will.

A monarchical scientist called "The Patron" developed the technology, but realizes too late that he made this world and its faults. *DefCon 4* is also the team name for the four main characters—Jadon, Miko, Diano and Ryka. They rely on the Patron's technology and are determined to stop its undoing.

DefCon 4 is penciled by Mat Broome, inked by Edwin Rosell, and colored by Wendy Fouts, with a computer coloring team headed by Jeromy Cox.

DefCon 4 #1 launches in February.

• Penciler Dan Norton developed *Black Ops* as an offshoot of International Operations, showing the team—Shire, Redbird, GQ and Geek—cut off from their own agency and forced to fight their way home.

Norton is also co-plotting, with a script by Shon Bury. The books will be inked by Sandra Hope, with in-house coloring by Sean Ruffner and Leann Clark.

Black Ops #1 ships in January. ■ *Gary St. Lawrence, Andrew Kardon*

Batman Crossover Leads Into *Detective* #700

The 11-part Batman Family crossover in January and February kicks off the momentum that leads the titles into ***Detective* #700** this June. "This story helps us gallop toward that finish line," said editor **Dennis O'Neil**. "It sets up some of the things that will pay off in #700."

Called "Contagion," the tale focuses on a plague virus being tested by the Order of St. Dumas, the ancient organization that created **Azrael**. The germs cause the human body to dehydrate rapidly, breaking bones and constricting muscles. A rogue faction of the order gains control of this terrible biological weapon and wipes out a village in Greenland—except for three inhabitants, who scatter across the globe. The plague spreads when a member of the Order unknowingly carries it to Gotham City's exclusive Babylon Towers enclave for the wealthy.

"There's real detective work involved here, as the heroes try to uncover the survivors and figure out what made them resistant to the virus," O'Neil explained. "Those that aren't tracking the survivors must deal with riots and looting."

In addition to the Order, others are seeking these survivors too. They include **Poison Ivy**, who plays a major role, and the **Penguin**. The title characters also will intermingle among the books, with **Catwoman** appearing in *Azrael* and ***Robin***. "Most of the time, Catwoman and Azrael are off doing their own thing," O'Neil noted. "We want this story to remind the readers that they are part of the Batman family." **Nightwing** and the **Huntress** also will appear in the series.

The story begins January 16th in *Batman: Shadow of the Bat* #48. It continues for the next five weeks through *Detective* #695 and *Robin* #27; *Catwoman* #31 and *Azrael* #15; *Batman* #529 and *Batman: Shadow of the Bat* #49; *Detective* #696, *Batman Chronicles* #4 (a tie-in), and *Catwoman* #32; and *Azrael* #16 and *Robin* #28. ■ *Craig Shutt*

Sin City Begins Six-Issue Arc

Frank Miller's acclaimed *Sin City* series begins a new six-issue story in February. Titled "That Yellow Bastard," the arc features a new lead character but also includes several familiar faces from previous storylines.

"All of these stories are interconnected, in all kinds of complicated ways," Miller laughs.

The story begins eight years in the past and focuses on Hartigan, a cop on the verge of retirement. He puts his career and life on the line to save Nancy the cowgirl, who first appeared in 1993's *A Dame to Kill For*. The tale follows their relationship over the years, winding up "somewhere in the middle [of the time] of all the other Sin City stories."

Hartigan continues to serve as Nancy's protector even when imprisoned for his good deeds. "It's almost a father/daughter relationship that develops," Miller notes. This being *Sin City*, that sentimental note doesn't permeate the story. "This is probably my roughest title so far," he admits. "It's a real ordeal for the lead character, who is pushing 70 by the time the story ends. He'll be put through his paces, but he handles himself just fine."

The final two issues will feature spot yellow color to highlight the title character's appearance. Otherwise, Miller will continue the high-contrast style he's made popular in the series, although this tale won't feature the highly "illustrative" approach he used for the *Sin City: Silent Night* one-shot.

"The style for each story changes a little as I refine the look. I'd hate to be standing still."

Miller is also working up scripts for the next Martha Washington arc, called "Martha Washington Saves the World." Illustrated by Dave Gibbons, the three- or four-part story hasn't been scheduled yet, but it is planned for sometime this year. ■ *Craig Shutt*

BUZZ BOX

The inside scoop on the comic industry

• Jim Lee drawing *Fantastic Four*? Or Rob Liefeld drawing *Iron Man*? It might happen. Buzz hears that Marvel might license its comic book titles to individual Image Comics studios for Image to produce—specifically WildStorm Productions and Extreme Studios. Topps Comics is also reported to be in the mix. Among the titles rumored to be a part of this arrangement are the Spider-Man titles, *Captain America*, *Fantastic Four*, *Iron Man* and *Daredevil*. Neither Marvel, Image nor Topps would confirm or deny the rumor.

• On the film front, writer Neil Gaiman recently confirmed—through the letter's page of *The Sandman* #73—that there is a Sandman movie in the works, though he curiously said he will not be involved with it. A Stray Bullets movie is rumored to be a go with series writer/artist David Lapham as the film's writer/director. No word yet from the Lapham camp on the project.

• Buzz spotted former tennis star John McEnroe in New York City at a Christie's auction in November, where Mac snapped up an original *Fantastic Four* cover for more than $1700.

• The doctor is out…again. Marvel sources have confirmed that the classic Marvel sorcerer Dr. Strange has had his title shelved. Will he be back? This is the third time the good doctor's book has been canceled. No word from Marvel about future plans for Dr. Strange.

• Batman and Captain America teaming up beyond the big Marvel/DC crossover? Buzz has been hearing for months that writer/artist John Byrne (*Wonder Woman*) will be tackling a one-shot project teaming the two heroes. However, official confirmation has yet to surface. Word on the street is that, unlike any previous Marvel/DC crossover, this team-up will be an "Elseworlds"-type tale set in the 1940s. ■

HARRAS
Takes Charge at Marvel

Bob Harras, Editor-in-Chief of the **X-Men** family of titles, has been issuing memos with a new title: Editor-in-Chief. Of everything.

"I think Bob Harras' appointment to Editor-in-Chief is long overdue," said *X-Men* and *Uncanny X-Men* writer **Scott Lobdell**. "In his 13 years at Marvel [eight of them spent editing the X-Men line], he has shown a clear and accurate vision of what makes a good comic."

Although no formal announcement has been made, Marvel has confirmed the appointment.

Prior to his X association, Harras edited *Incredible Hulk, G.I. Joe* and *X-Factor*. Harras has also provided scripts for a manifold of Marvel titles, with his longest runs on *Avengers* and *Namor*. In 1988, he mutated into the X-Men editor with issue #232. Official announcement of his being Editor-in-Chief for the entire line is expected in early 1996.

"It has become clear over the past several months," said a Marvel staffer, "that the 'family' approach to the Marvel Universe [dividing all titles into separate and distinct groups] only served to fracture the close continuity of the publishing company rather than play to its strengths. When the time came to place somebody in the position of steering the editorial content of the comics, Bob Harras was the *only* choice."

Harras was unavailable for comment. He is expected to continue his mutie duties. "I think he will continue to serve as editor on *Uncanny* and *X-Men* on a daily basis," said Lobdell. "Personally, I think it's important for an editor-in-chief to actually keep his hands dirty on at least a handful of monthly books…sort of like a choreographer who keeps dancing or a director who continues acting."

"No one perceives Harras' promotion as a demotion of the other editors-in-chief," the Marvel source explained, "as much as a restructuring of the current editorial responsibilities necessitated by the wildly fluctuating marketplace."

"I am a hundred thousand percent confident that, when all is said and done," Lobdell summed up, "the industry will see Bob's role as editor-in-chief at Marvel to be a milestone in the annals of comicdom!" ■ *Ruth Morrison*

BYTE THIS!

Make Vampirella Your Valentine...Online

Comics' sexiest vampire will bare her fangs and steal your heart on Valentine's Day. Meet the real-life Vampirella and her current comic writer Tom Sniegoski in the *Wizard* chat room on February 14th at 7:00-7:45 p.m. (EST).

"Sinking my teeth into some lucky fan for Valentine's Day makes my blood rush," said Vampirella.

"I'm thrilled to be able to meet Vampi fans. I'm looking forward to their questions," said Sniegoski. ■ *Buddy Scalera*

Starchild at a Crossroads

With a four-issue limited series entitled ***Crossroads*, James Owen** plans to bring his popular independent serial ***Starchild*** to the stands on a regular schedule. Owen's black-and-white series has been the object of much critical acclaim in recent months, but long periods between issues have left many fans hungry for more consistency.

However, if Owen leaves too much time between issues, it certainly isn't due to a lack of ideas. He has the story's plot of myth and magic planned out for "approximately the next 100 issues," according to office manager Eric Dinehart.

Fortunately for fans, Owen wants those issues in readers' hands as soon as possible.

Dinehart explained that Owen has essentially foregone doing interviews and press appearances in order to concentrate on the story and let it speak for him.

Since the release of the first issue in 1992, *Starchild* has seen more than its fair share of cause for delay—from a car accident that left Owen with a broken drawing hand to a self-confessed period of emotional unhealth in 1994.

Starchild #12 in June 1995 reported that the first part of the "Crossroads" storyline in issues #13-16 would be released biweekly through the summer; none of those issues, however have yet seen print.

Dinehart explained that a relocation of headquarters was responsible for the gap between issues, and the next installment should be on the stands before the end of December. Instead of continuing regular numbering however, Owen has decided to begin publishing his story as a series of limited series, beginning with *Starchild: Crossroads* #1 in December.

Crossroads, consisting of four short stories revealing gaps of information about the characters, precedes *Starchild: Metropolis*, a 14-part maxi-series. In addition to the limited series, Owen is releasing the 48-page ***Fool's Hollow*** in December, the first in a series of full-color one-shots. ■ *Dean Simakis*

company updates

AC COMICS

AC's *Golden Age Greats* Vol. 7 due out in January, features a special tribute to Frank Frazetta. The "Best of the West" themed issue features a special color plate by the legendary fantasy painter.

ANTARCTIC PRESS

Coming in May is the *Warrior Nun/Razor* two-issue, full-color crossover mini-series from Antarctic and London Night Studios. Expect the Warrior Nun to gain her own regular series by summer's end.

BIG ENTERTAINMENT

Big Entertainment and best-selling author Tom Clancy (*Clear and Present Danger*) have joined forces to create an entertainment franchise which will publish and license a slew of new characters and properties. The partnership, named NetCo Partners, will release *Tom Clancy's Net Force* as its first project, tentatively scheduled for the summer of '96. *Net Force*, set in 2025, deals with a police force that specializes in virtual reality crimes.... Quentin Tarantino's ("Pulp Fiction") latest film project, "From Dusk Till Dawn," will be adapted as a 48-page graphic novel from Big Entertainment, shipping in February. The story follows two criminal brothers that become trapped in a Mexican strip club, while being surrounded by vampires. (Sounds like a good family film!)

CALIBER PRESS

January is *Negative Burn* spin-off month. Caliber will spotlight three titles that originally gained popularity in the anthology including *The Apparition*, *Kilroy is Here* and *Dominique*. Both *Kilroy is Here* and *Apparition* will continue as monthly titles.

CHAOS! COMICS

Lady Death: The Odyssey, an all-new mini-series debuting in March, reunites the LD team: writer Brian Pulido, artist Steven Hughes and colorist Jason Jensen. The story takes Ms. Death out of Hell into a conflict where she must choose sides she's not comfortable with.... If you can't get enough of Lady Death and Boris Vallejo, you'll go nuts over the amazing painter's poster of Lady Demon featuring LD's demonic persona. It's a whopping 24" x 36", and should be out in January for only $5.95.

Lady Death: The Odyssey

CRUSADE COMICS

It's time for a brand-new Crusade title, *Horseman*! Featuring art by comic book newcomer Mshindo, this story of a Japanese warrior named Jung was previewed in the *Shi Fan Appreciation Edition #2*. The first issue, shipping in February, guest-stars Shi herself, in an appearance taking place between the *Grifter/Shi: Final Rites* story and her arrival in the U.S. That same month, *Tomoe #2* introduces another, more mysterious Crusade character, as Tomoe tries to prove herself as a strong leader.

DARK HORSE COMICS

In January, Stan Sakai's rabbit samurai Usagi Yojimbo moves to Dark Horse beginning with a three-issue *Space Usagi* mini-series. Then in April, another mini-series will commence simply called *Usagi Yojimbo*.... Congrats to the *Legend of Mother Sarah* manga series for winning a Parents' Choice Award. The eight-issue mini-series, published during 1995, will be collected in paperback in March. An all-new seven-issue *Sarah* mini-series is slated for January.

DC COMICS

In February, the ongoing *Hitman* debuts from writer Garth Ennis (*Preacher*) and artist John McCrea. In the first issue, the series' star, Tommy Monaghan, is a superhuman assassin-for-hire contracted to break into Arkham Asylum to kill the Joker.... In February the *Preacher: Gone to Texas* trade paperback is released collecting *Preacher #1-#7*.

FOUR COLOR IMAGES

Based in New York City, Four Color will be exhibiting John Bolton's painted art from DC's *Batman: Man-Bat* mini-series from December 8 through January 20. For more info, call the gallery at (212) 431-4234.

HARRIS COMICS

Don't forget to pick up *Vampirella of Drakulon #1*, which retells the unforgettable Vampi stories of yesterday. This book, shipping in January, sports an all-new wraparound cover by Michael Bair.

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CALVIN & HOBBES TAKE THEIR LAST WAGON TRIP

Bill Watterson, the award-winning cartoonist who created "**Calvin & Hobbes**," has sent the final comic strip featuring the pair to his syndicate, for publication on December 31, 1995.

In a letter to his editor at Universal Press Syndicate, Watterson said the decision to end the adventures of the small boy and his stuffed (or is Hobbes real?) tiger was neither easy nor recent. "I believe I've done what I can do within the constraints of daily deadlines and small panels," he wrote.

"I am eager to work at a more thoughtful pace, with fewer artistic compromises."

Though the nature of Watterson's future projects remains unknown, he said he would continue to work with Universal Press and its affiliate, Andrews and McMeel, which publishes the collected "Calvin & Hobbes" in book form.

Watterson's fellow syndicated cartoonists were simultaneously saddened by his departure and yet not surprised by it. "It's sad that someone of Bill's talent, and with such a clear love for the artform and medium, feels the creation of a daily strip no longer presents him sufficient challenge or interest," said **Bill Amend**, creator of "**Fox Trot**."

"While I don't think this marks the beginning of some sort of mass exodus on the part of cartoonists, it certainly should be a wake-up call to those editors who shrink Sunday strips down to the size of a postcard." **Chris Browne**, who draws "**Hagar the Horrible**," expressed hope: "Bill Watterson is a true, uncut genius—the greatest cartoonist of the decade. He'll be missed; he'll be back." ■ *Patrick Daniel O'Neill*

Sandman Shuts His Eyes

"I suppose I feel very satisfied now that the work is done," concluded **Neil Gaiman** as his groundbreaking series ***The Sandman*** approaches its 75th and final issue. "I found myself somewhat sad during the writing of 'The Kindly Ones' (*The Sandman* #57-#69), but 'The Wake' (*The Sandman* #70-#72) was my letting-go process. And I always knew that the story of Dream would end with 'The Tempest,' which is, after all, a short story about finishing things."

The Sandman #75, due on the stands in January, is a double-sized issue in which Morpheus collects the last part of the debt owed him by William Shakespeare, a story begun in "Men of Good Fortune" (*The Sandman* #13) and continued in "A Midsummer Night's Dream" (*The Sandman* #19). Illustrator **Charles Vess**, who collaborated with Gaiman on that World Fantasy Award-winning tale, joins him again for this final issue, which also features a bound-in, four-color gatefold poster (with art by *Sandman* cover artist **Dave McKean** on one side and a Sandman timeline on the other) and a two-page "farewell" by Gaiman.

Gaiman's next immediate project lies outside comics. "Neverwhere," his BBC television series which begins filming in February, is scheduled for next fall. He has also committed to writing a novel based on the series, to be published in October. Other notable items on the schedule: He and Vess are collaborating on a creator-owned project, ***Neil Gaiman and Charles Vess's Stardust*** for Vertigo, while he and McKean have a children's book, *Today I Swapped My Dad for Two Goldfish*, due out from White Wolf in 1996.

And, while *The Sandman* has ended its acclaimed monthly run, the melody lingers on. ***Death: The Time of Your Life***, a four-issue mini-series by Gaiman, **Chris Bachalo** and **Mark Buckingham**, is scheduled to begin publication in February.

Gaiman describes it as "a story which is really as much about Foxglove and Hazel as it is about Death, and as much about death as a phenomenon as about Death as a person, something quite different from the first Death mini-series.

"Also, we are going to do a collection of Dave McKean's *Sandman* covers, to be called *Dust Covers*. I have promised Dave that I will write a new Sandman story for him to illustrate in that volume." ■ *Jack Curtin*

company updates

IMAGE COMICS
• WILDSTORM ENTERTAINMENT

Adam Hughes (*Ghost*) will be writing and penciling the two-part *Gen*[13] *Ordinary Heroes* which ships in February and March. ... Warren Ellis (*Ruins*) is taking over the regular writing chores of *StormWatch* with issue #37. ... Jonathan Peterson and Kevin Maguire's six-issue *Strikeback!* mini-series begins in January. The first three issues are identical to the ones Malibu put out in 1994, except they each contain some additional material. ... A *Deviants* series (a Gen group working for Ivanna, that recently appeared in *Gen*[13] #6) has been bumped to an indefinite time. ... The *Grifter/Shi* hardcover book solicited for December has been postponed until March. The good news, though, is that it's much more affordable. Rather than a 64-page hardcover at $30, the story will be told in a two-part mini-series priced at $2.95 an issue. However, you can still get autographed hardcover editions for $75 (Bill Tucci or Jim Lee), $64.95 (Travis Charest) or $50 (Troy Hubbs).

KITCHEN SINK PRESS

Kitchen Sink announced a recall on the first issue of *Death Rattle*, which originally shipped in November with a misprinted page. Retailers are supposed to get a corrected copy for free and distribute them free to people who purchased them originally. Kitchen Sink is requesting that copies with the misprint be destroyed.

MALIBU COMICS

Malibu's big push in February is *Foxfire*, the shiny chick that came out of "The Phoenix Resurrection" storyline. The ongoing series explores how Foxy's powers tie into the Phoenix's. ... The 48-page *All-New Exiles* #5 marks a major turning point in the series as readers can expect something bad to happen to Juggernaut. The story will conclude in a yet-undisclosed issue of Marvel's *Uncanny X-Men*.

TOPPS COMICS

Coming in February is *Duckman* #0 which reprints the Dark Horse Comics one-shot from 1990. It's written and drawn by Duckman creator Everett Peck.

WARP GRAPHICS

January sees the release of the final issue of the series *New Blood*. The explosive finale signifies major changes for the *New Blood* characters and leads directly into the new Elfquest series *Fire-Eye*.

WCG COMICS

Writer/artist Randy Renaldo will collect his early *Adventure Strip Digest* starring *Rob Hanes* work in a trade paperback titled *Rob Hanes Archives* in March. The collection is a good starting point for new readers.

Here Come the Brides

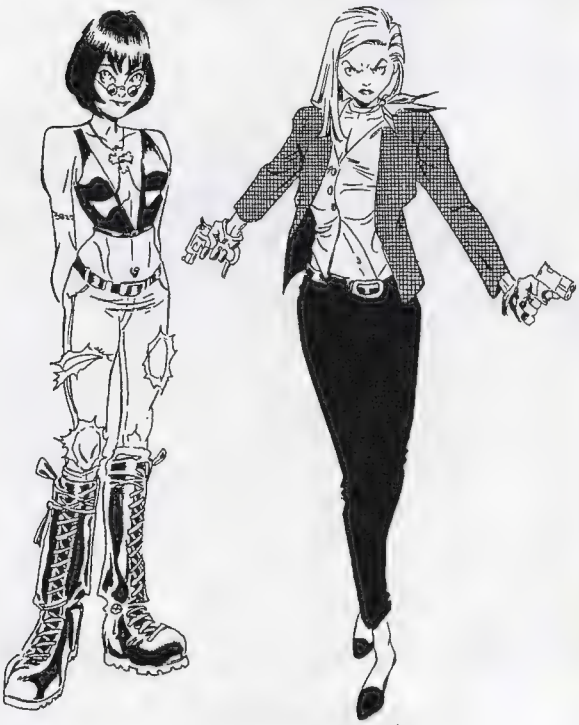
Event Comics, publisher of **Joe Quesada**'s ***Ash***, debuts a new title in March—***22 Brides.*** A four-issue mini-series, written by **Fabian Nicieza** (with additional plotting by Quesada and **Jimmy Palmiotti**) and drawn by newcomer Scott Lee, *22 Brides* includes a prologue and epilogue each issue by Quesada and Palmiotti.

"*22 Brides* is about the baddest street gang in New York City," explained Quesada. "They're a group of girls that we first met in *Ash* #3, which is reprinted in the new trade paperback for those who missed it. The core of the mini-series is the gang's involvement with the mob, and deciding which side of the law they're going to operate on. There's a large cast of characters in *22 Brides*—and they're *not* super-powered. *22 Brides* is about stories that ring true-to-life."

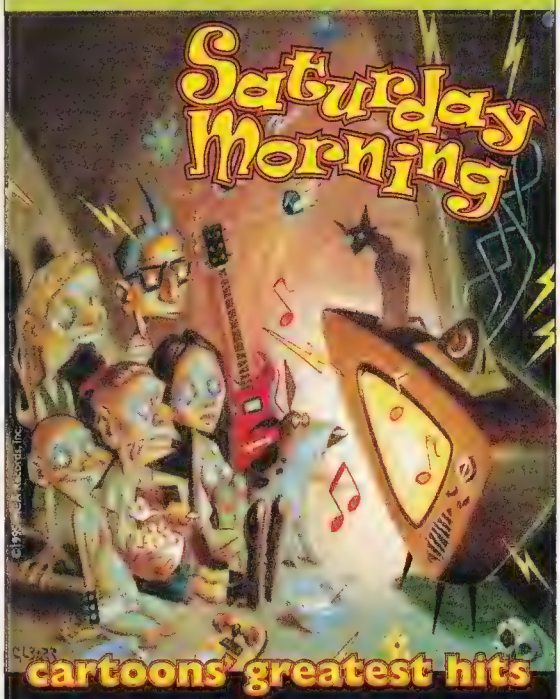
The two core characters, Carrie and Libby, are certainly true-to-life—they're the core of a real-life band by the same name. "We're doing this in conjunction with 22 Brides," said Quesada. "Their second album, *Beeker* (released by Zero Hour/MCA) is a soundtrack for the series."

Quesada stressed that *22 Brides* is not another addition to the current "Bad Girl comic" craze. "This isn't about a bunch of women jumping around in leotards. Scott Lee—whose art is phenomenal and like nothing else you've ever seen—is drawing them in normal street clothes. Some characters have tragic stories, some have pleasant stories. It's the mixture of different personalities and the ordeals that they go through together that really binds them in this group." ■ *Greg McElhatton* W

Character sketches of Carrie (left) and Jane Doe.



Altoonative Rock For Cartoon Lovers



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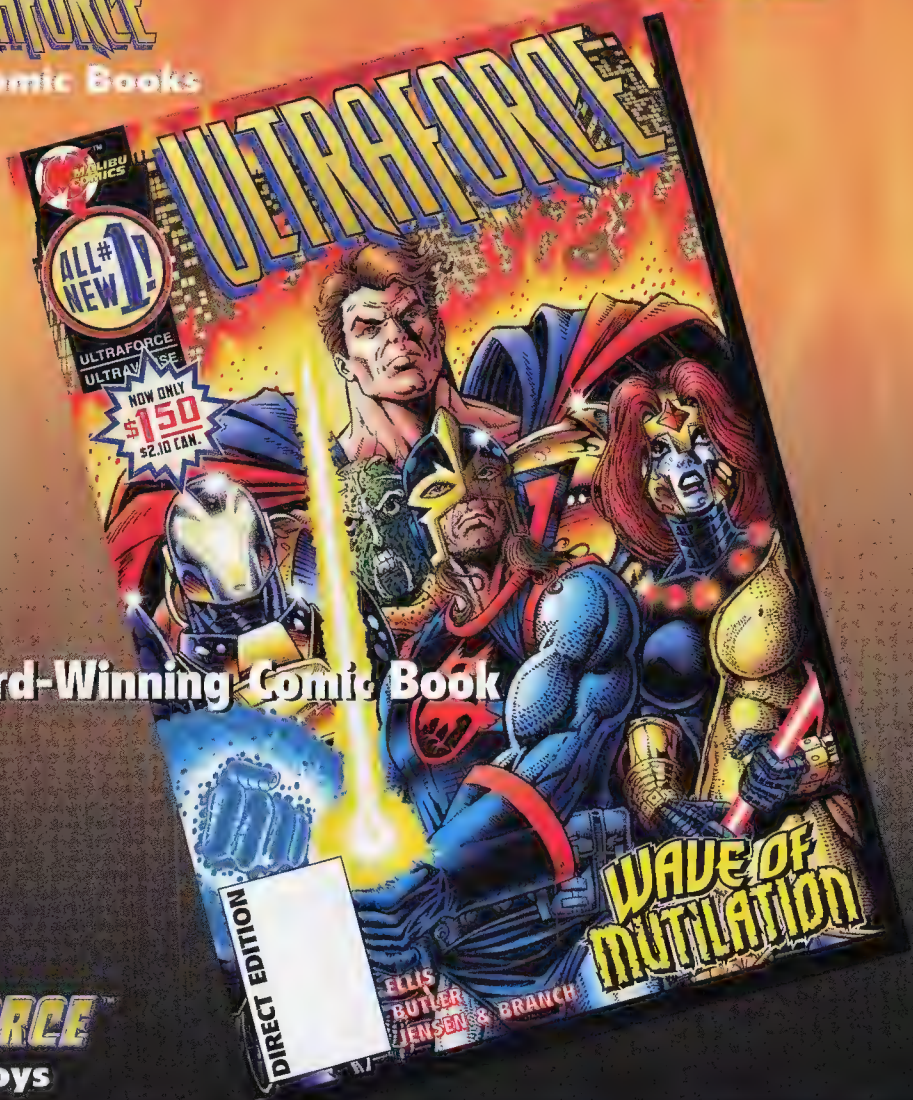

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Above: the new (left) vs. the old, as Iron Men collide. Inset at right: Tony Stark, age 19

NUTS & BOLTS

THERE'S A NEW IRON MAN IN TOWN... AND HIS NAME IS TONY STARK

BY MATTHEW BRADY

IN A NUTSHELL: Tony Stark, better known as Iron Man to the Marvel Universe, has gone bad. Really bad. But everything's going to be okay—the Avengers have gone back in time and pulled a 19-year-old Tony Stark to the present to take down the screwed-up Tony Stark.

Huh?!? Time...travel...head...hurts...

It's not that complicated, says *Iron Man* writer Terry Kavanagh. "The Avengers realize that to defeat a genius like Tony Stark, they need a genius like Tony Stark." Kavanagh explains: The 19-year-old Tony is pulled from time before going to Vietnam, where his heart problem was revealed, which forced him into the armor to begin with.

"He'll still have the heart problem," the writer notes, "and that has a whole lot to do with the tragic consequences of his confrontation with the current Tony Stark."

But, Tony Stark? Mr. "I helped found the Avengers"? How could he go bad? When did he go nuts?

"The influences that have tainted him have been there almost from the beginning, probably from Kang's first confrontation with the Avengers [in *Avengers* #8] onwards," Kavanagh explains. "That's when Kang targeted two of the Avengers: Giant-Man and Tony. He was trying to influence both of them, and that's what more than likely led to Tony's alcoholism." With the help of Mantis, Kang finally succeeded in seducing Stark to his evil ways.

Since Tony's corruption was a long time in development, the Avengers realize they couldn't directly prevent it by going back to a specific point in time, which leads them to pluck a 19-year-old Tony from a past time.

According to Kavanagh, Tony wasn't even aware of Kang's influence in his life. He tried to unconsciously suppress it, which resulted in him becoming a control freak. "It was buried so deep in his subconscious that it never showed up in his thought balloons," Kavanagh says.

Tony was so out of it, he doesn't even remember brutally killing two members of the Avengers' supporting cast, the new Yellowjacket and Marilla (the nanny of Crystal and Quicksilver's daughter, Luna) in the recent *Avengers: The Crossing*. "It was mainly done during blackouts, some of which could have been alcoholic, and some Tony may have *attributed* to alcohol," Kavanagh says.

Tony will be as tortured by the revelation of the killer's identity as the rest of the Avengers. This will lead to his final redemption. "He's a guy who has been manipulated for a long time," explains Kavanagh. "When the realization fully hits him, he turns on his manipulators. He goes out a hero."

As far as the 19-year-old Tony goes, he's here to stay, and he's already got considerable baggage. "He will have faced his darkest future, and he's very afraid," Kavanagh states. "By seeing the corrupt Tony, he realizes he's got three swords hanging over his head: the use of technology for evil, alcoholism and womanizing." A pretty heavy load for a 19-year-old.

The young Tony will still be an Avenger, although not quite full-time. "He'll be going to Columbia University, and living on campus," Kavanagh says, "but he'll still have access to Avengers Mansion."

The various Avengers will each see the young Tony differently. Most notable among them will be Hawkeye and Giant-Man, who will both feel an obligation to prevent Tony's corruption from happening a second time. Also, although young Tony will try, he will no longer be in charge of Stark Enterprises. As per the older Stark's request in his will, a full board of directors will take over; the young Tony will be involved in a power struggle sometime in the future.

And what about the armor? Will young Tony get some new duds as a result of all this? "He's certainly not about to wear one of the suits the 'nasty' Iron Man wore, since he's still afraid of becoming that," Kavanagh notes. "He's going to build his own armor over the course of the next few months, until he has a full suit of new armor."

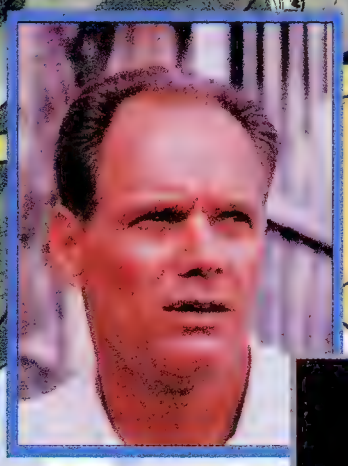
What's the end result of all this? Kavanagh has one word: renewal. "We'll start with a fresh Tony Stark. It's not like we've just put someone else in the armor," Kavanagh stresses. "By the end of this storyline, it will be very clear that Tony Stark is not interchangeable, and he alone is Iron Man."

Matthew Brady, who wrote the Maxx profile on page 72, has found so many parallels between his life and Tony Stark's, it's weird. Really.

Wizard *casts the* Dark Knight Returns *movie!*

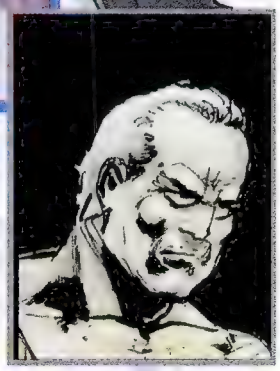
Casting call 2

Sure, there are three Batflicks out now, and all of 'em have been pretty successful, story flaws and all. But hey, why not take an awesome comic book story like Frank Miller's *Batman: The Dark Knight Returns*, shuffle a huge wad of dough to the right takers and make it into the ultimate Batblockbuster? Heck, we even have some ideas as to who would play whom…



BATMAN

We need a tough guy with a chiseled look and receding hairline, so former NFL star Fred Dryer ("Hunter") is our guy for the Dark Knight.

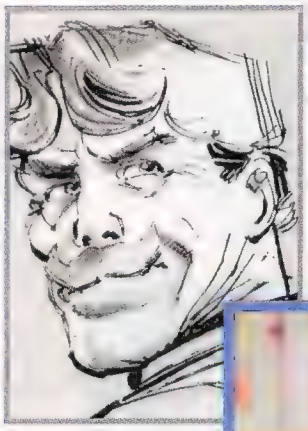


ROBIN

Someone kinda cute, yet no-nonsense, should be our young Robin actress. How 'bout Anna Chlumsky ("My Girl," "Gold Diggers")?

By a bunch of *Wizard* staffers

All photos: Everett Collection, unless otherwise noted.



COMMISSIONER GORDON

Sam Elliott ("Road House," "Tombstone") is a super choice as the older, more gruff Jim Gordon.

TWO-FACE

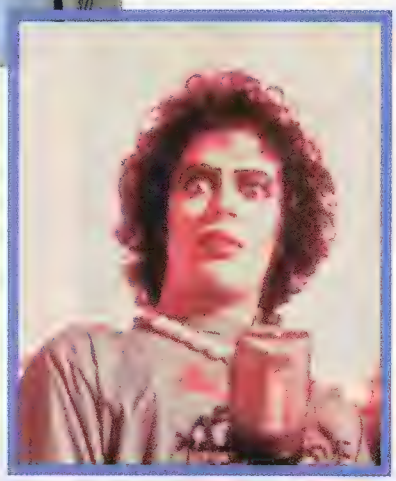
For the nutty-yet-sympathetic Two-Face, we want Ed Harris ("Apollo 13," "Just Cause"). Plus, he looks good bald.

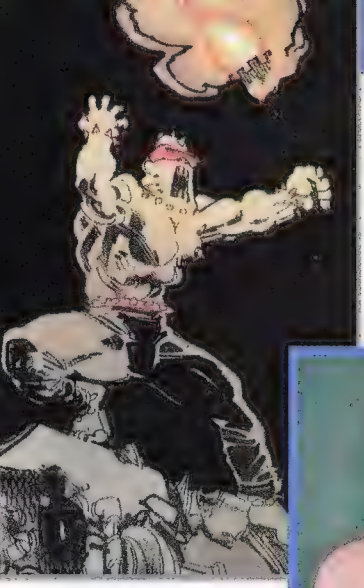
JOKER

Tim Curry would be brilliant as the freakish, aging Joker. Since he portrayed a similar character in "The Rocky Horror Picture Show," it wouldn't be too much of a stretch.

SUPERMAN

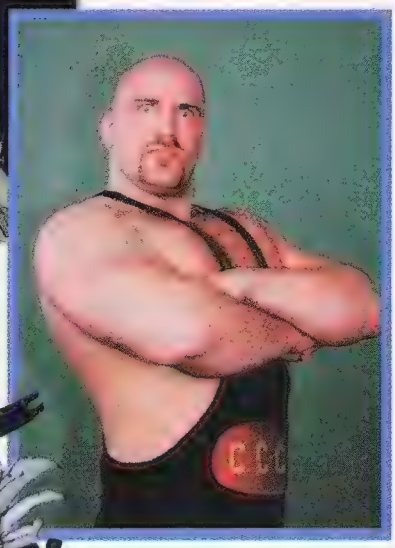
In *Dark Knight*, Clark Kent didn't really age that much, so we need a square-jawed young guy. Brad Johnson ("Always," "Flight of the Intruder") is our man.





MUTANT LEADER

This guy is so friggin' monstrous that only a pro wrestler can do him justice. So why not Nikita Kolov?

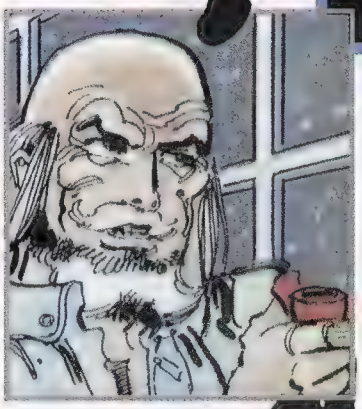


CAPT. ELLEN YINDEL

Jamie Lee Curtis ("True Lies," "Blue Steel") would play Commissioner Gordon's butch successor to a T.

GREEN ARROW

Best suited for sarcastic roles, Howard Hesseman ("Head of the Class," "WKRP in Cincinnati") could run rings around any other potential emerald bow-and-arrow guy.



ALFRED

Who better than Tony Randall ("The Odd Couple") to play Bruce Wayne's anal and ever-so-trustworthy butler?

DR. WOLPER

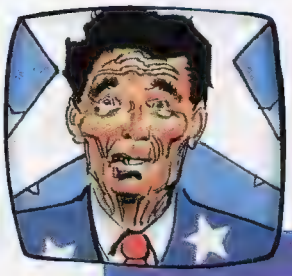
We had a couple of candidates for the dopey psychiatrist, but Gabe Kaplan ("Welcome Back, Kotter") won by a longshot after we saw this photo.

THE FAT GUY

Though David Ogden Stiers ("Doc Hollywood," "M.A.S.H.") probably ain't a bomb expert, he'd be good as the Joker's blubbery explosives pro.

DAVID ENDOCHRINE

Since Endochrine is based on "Late Show" host David Letterman, this is no stretch. Plus, Letterman could sure use that ratings boost.



RONALD REAGAN

Does this even need explanation? Didn't think so. (Though we'd have to explain it to Ronnie—he wouldn't remember doing the role.)

DR. RUTH WEISENHEIMER

C'mon...! This is no stretch either, as the comic's Dr. Ruth is based on the real Dr. Ruth Westheimer.

So how 'bout it? This movie would kick major buttocks. And the story deserves it. When it comes right down to it, it would be a whole lotta fun to watch. And if a quirky flick like "Batman Forever" can rake in the bucks, this Batclassic would break all the records! W

The Wizard staff generally likes to fart. The girls too.

GARTH ENNIS AND STEVE DILLON'S UNHOLY QUEST FOR GOD IN PREACHER TAKES A TWISTED AND VIOLENT PATH

...AND THE LESSON'S BEGUN.

IMMORTAL COMBAT

BY CRAIG SHUTT

A GUY STICKING A BAYONET IN HIS OWN THROAT. Women getting punched in the face. Villains sodomizing a petting zoo.

Twisted? Unsettling? Sure, *Preacher* gets right in your face. It doesn't hold back on the profanity or graphic violence. But for all this Vertigo title's graphic nature, its creators say the book's fundamental goal is to examine themes such as loyalty, responsibility and the obligations of the immortal Creator.

"I want *Preacher* to be fast-moving, funny, fairly irreverent and very violent," says writer Garth Ennis, who created the book with artist Steve Dillon, his long-time friend and partner on Vertigo's *Hellblazer* for over two years. "I originally thought that *Preacher* could encompass every kind of story I'd ever want to do. But as it came together over a year or so, I realized I wanted it to develop specific themes I've been thinking about."

The book focuses on Jesse Custer, a former minister in Annville, Texas. He finds himself melded with a combined angelic/demonic force called Genesis when it escapes from heaven; in doing so, Jesse unfortunately obliterates the 200 people in his congregation during mid-sermon. This newfound power gives Jesse the ability to make anyone do anything he asks. Enter one angel who reveals that the Lord has forsaken his creations and Jesse takes off to find God—literally.

Left and above: Jesse Custer, perhaps the most powerful human alive
Opposite top: The Saint of Killers
Opposite right: A tense face-off from *Preacher #4*

"The major theme is the mortal confrontation of the immortal," Ennis explains. "Jesse aims to face down God and make him take responsibility. Jesse wants to tell him that if you're going to land us with life on Earth, you damn well better not run out on us halfway through." Indeed, he promises, "the Lord will be popping up every so often."

CAST IN STONE

JOINING CUSTER ARE AN IRISH VAMPIRE NAMED Cassidy and Tulip, a novice freelance assassin who is also Custer's former girlfriend. He is also aided by the spirit of actor John Wayne, who materializes to offer occasional advice. And Custer's trailed by the Saint of Killers, the patron saint of murderers, who's been sent to retrieve Genesis by any means necessary. Obviously, this is not your typical "quest" scenario.

"Garth and I both love the Clint Eastwood westerns and the Dirty Harry movies," says Dillon. "*Preacher* was born out of that. It's chock full of violence and machismo, but it had to be a laugh as well." In fact, he adds, the Saint of Killers' image is a combination of Ennis' pick of Eastwood and Dillon's choice of actor Lee Marvin, "the meanest-looking son of a bitch who ever lived."

Custer's journey through America stands at the center of the book. "He's very committed," Ennis says. "He had to have a sense of honor and morality, but I didn't want to make him a humorless git. He's a very complex character. There's a lot of stuff I want to talk about, and it will come through Jesse."

Dillon created Custer's look with one key goal: make him different from the blonde-haired *Hellblazer* star, John Constantine, who is said to be modeled after rock star Sting. "I wanted to make Jesse dark, almost Latin-looking," the artist says. "He's a different kind of handsome than Constantine, with bigger, wider eyes—except I sometimes forget to draw them that way."

Ennis, in fact, stresses that there's no connection between the two famous protagonists. "I keep telling people, but I can't get them to believe it," he says. "I guarantee that Jesse's initials have nothing to do with Constantine or Jesus Christ, although people in the book might think that at some point." In fact, he assures readers, neither Constantine nor any other Vertigo stars will be showing up. "It's a very self-contained universe."

ALL IN THE DESIGN

CUSTER AND CASSIDY ARE POLAR OPPOSITES— even if they share the same sense of humor, Ennis says. "Cassidy's the ultimate yabbo." As a member of the undead, Cassidy can take any poi-

son or drug he wants, and he uses that to full advantage. He can even stick a bayonet in his throat to get himself out of tight spots, as he did in issue #7. "That was quite popular with readers," Ennis says. Finding himself surrounded by police in a serial killer's apartment in daylight (Remember, he's a vampire...), Cassidy stabs himself in the throat so he appears dead. Police assume he's a victim, zip him into a body bag and take him to the morgue. Once it gets dark, he walks out, scaring the hell out of the morgue attendant.

"Cassidy is more of a one-note character, the classic lovable rogue taken to extremes," Ennis adds. "But he has a past of his own, and at one point he took life far more seriously. You'll see that when I get into his origin. They all have these incredibly fouled-up origins that I'll get to in time. And I'd like to do Cassidy's origin soon."

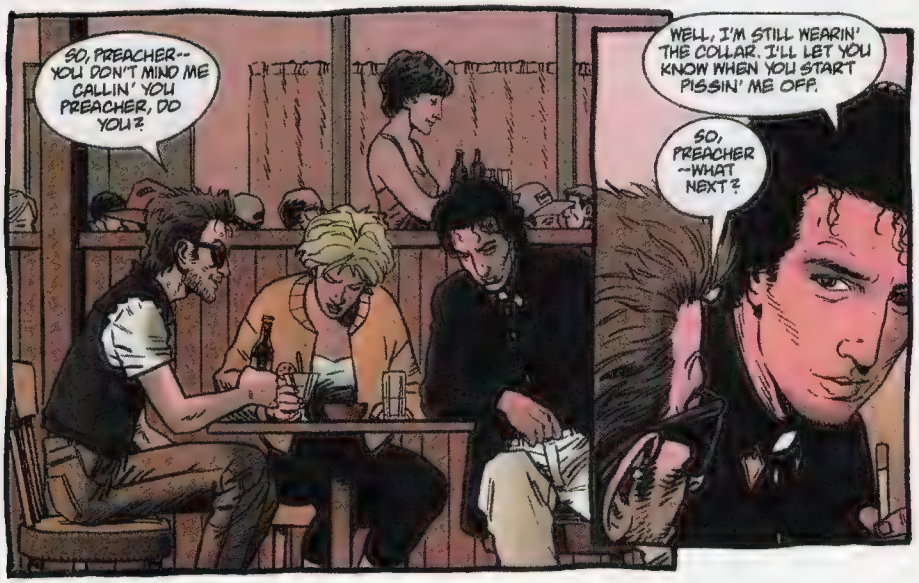
The vampire's look began as an homage to Shane MacGowan, leader of the Irish rock band The Pogues, Dillon notes. "That's where we started, but it's moved away from that in later issues," he says.

Ennis' image for the tall, skinny Tulip came from Anne Parillaud, star of the movie "La Femme Nikita," except he envisioned her as a redhead and Dillon made her a blonde. "She's a constant between Cassidy and Jesse," Ennis says. "But she has a past of her own. She's very serious now, but she has a lighter side we'll be seeing once she and Jesse work everything out [in issue #12]."

Although *Preacher* is a male-oriented book, he adds, "In a way, Tulip is probably the most important character to the themes of loyalty and friendship. She's the one that everything will happen around."

THE KILLING JOKE

THOSE THEMES OF LOYALTY AND FRIENDSHIP, especially as they relate to the three main characters, will recur throughout the run, which Ennis says he has worked out roughly for about 60 issues. Responsibility shows up in many ways, such as in how Custer uses his powers. In issue #5, for instance, he explains to Cassidy why he doesn't use his powers for wealth and sex. "You got the power, you got to use it right," Custer says. Especially, he notes, if you're looking for the Creator so you can make him face up to his own responsibilities.



Cassidy, Tulip and Jesse chew the fat as they hide from trouble.

Ennis has no plans for a treatise, however. After all, how could he with such scenes as a man's face being peeled away and nailed back onto his head upside down, and a huge serrated hunter's knife getting rammed through Tulip's hand—not to mention that bayonet Cassidy sticks in his own neck? (The sodomy in the petting zoo is on the way—see the sidebar above.)

FUTURE SERMONS

Following the wrap-up of Jesse's origin in *Preacher* #12, a number of key characters will be introduced in "Hunters" beginning in #13, reveals writer Garth Ennis. "We're moving everything up a gear."

That cast includes Jesus DeSade, who runs a gang of perverts in San Francisco. When introduced, he's sodomizing his way through a petting zoo. The issue features Ennis' long-promised scene of armadillo buggering ("Jesus is into that.") and introduces us to two investigators of sexual oddities.

The foremost new character will be Star, the leader of a branch of the Grail, which is protecting a secret at the heart of *Preacher*. "He'll be Jesse's main enemy from nigh on," Ennis says. "He'll be with us right to the end of the book." Taking over as editor with that issue is Axel Alonso, after co-editing #11 and #12 with Stuart Moore.

Cassidy returns in #13 as well. He left for San Francisco at the end of #7 to take it easy, while Jesse and Tulip headed south to deal with some personal matters.

Other plans include a trade paperback of the first seven issues in February. A *Saint of Killers* mini-series with art by Steve Pugh (*Animal Man*) may appear by early summer starring the patron saint of murderers, and a one-shot is being considered for Arseface, a popular early character (who comes by his name due to a failed suicide that left a hole in his face). "Don't know what we'll be calling that one," Ennis muses. "But I'd really like to put his name on the cover somewhere." ■ CS

But Ennis admits he doesn't want to numb readers with shock value at the flip of a page. "I have to be careful of doing things like sticking the knife in Tulip's hand when the reader turns the page," he says. "It can get worn out. But it's a tool we have in comics that no other medium has."

With so much violence and religious irreverence, is the *Preacher* team braced for a full-scale controversy? "I touch on stuff that would cause trouble if it got into the right hands," Ennis admits. "People won't believe this, but I don't actually set out to shock or cause controversy. I write it because I enjoy it. I get a kick out of writing this really sick stuff, but I also do it because I think it's funny and it'll make me and Steve laugh."

The book, in fact, receives an enormous volume of mail, says Editor Stuart Moore, and almost all of it is positive. "It's not a book for everyone, but I think those who don't like it realize that quickly and leave it alone," he says. "What I like is that it attracts people beyond the usual Vertigo fans, and it's happening without Garth and Steve doing a superhero book."

Turning Ennis' strange characters and violent scenes into visuals takes something extra, Dillon admits. "I drag it up from the deep blackness of my soul," he laughs. "It's all well and good for Garth to write this stuff—he can knock out a script in about a week—but I have to spend my month living with it. And drawing some of it [such as the full-page Gran'ma panel at the end of issue #8] makes me feel pretty sick."

Ennis hopes the macabre ambiance the two create doesn't become a focus. "A lot of people will pick up on the violent and controversial aspects," he admits. "But at its heart, *Preacher* is rather a moral book. Good and evil are fairly clearly defined, and good does tend to triumph one way or another. It just has to learn to fight dirtier than evil." W

Craig Shutt, who reported on the superstar artist phenomenon in issue #53, is glad he doesn't have a nickname like "Arseface."

ACROSS THE AGES HE WREAKS UNSPEAKABLE HORROR.

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Writer of JONAH HEX:
TWO-GUN MOJO and
JONAH HEX: RIDERS OF
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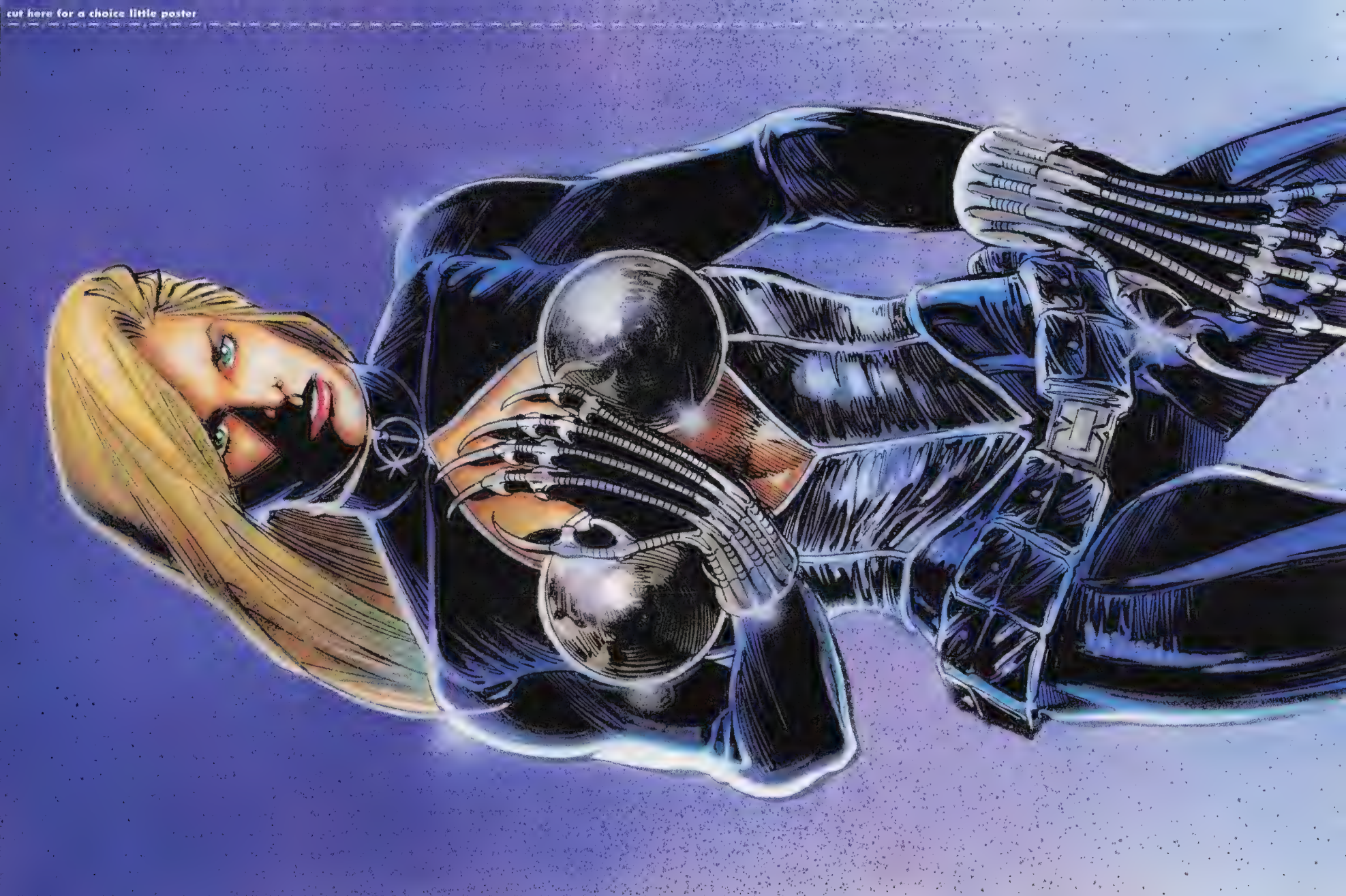


FIRST LOOK

MAGGIE THE CAT

VITAL STATS

WHO?
Maggie the Cat

WHAT?
Creator Mike Grell's "James Bond with breasts"

DEBUT?
Jon Sable: Freelance #11 (1984)

WHAT'S THE DEAL?
A widow of a rotten British Lord who left her with nothing, Maggie turned to cat burglary to make ends meet. Now she's being blackmailed into working with the British government to help it out with international espionage.

MIKE GRELL'S BAD GIRL REEMERGES IN HER OWN MONTHLY IMAGE COMICS SERIES

"SHE WILL HAVE NO BROAD SWORD AND NO SKIMPY BIKINI," chuckles *Maggie the Cat* creator Mike Grell. "But with a name like Maggie the Cat, it goes without saying that she will be wearing black leather and flashing claws."

While this is a "First Look," Maggie the Cat has a definite history. Described by writer/artist Grell as "James Bond with breasts," the heroine appeared frequently in Grell's *Jon Sable: Freelance* throughout the '80s, before disappearing into comic book history. She recently reappeared in *Shaman's Tears* #12 and, thanks to Grell and Image Comics (aided by colorist Rob Prior, letterer Steve Haynie and art assistant Brian Snoddy), she's set for all-new monthly adventures beginning in January.

"It's become very obvious that the most popular and best selling books feature sexy ladies and so there's a certain amount to be said for my cashing in on a craze," admits Grell about Maggie's return. "But, for me, there's a lot more to bringing this character back than that."

Maggie the Cat, a.k.a. Lady Margaret Graemalcyn, is the widow of a cheating British Lord who left her with nothing but a Scottish castle. To make ends meet, Maggie turned to burglary on a worldwide scale. As the new series opens (besides repeating her origin for all those new readers out there), the British government and, in particular, the SAS (Special Air Service) use information about her criminal activities to blackmail her into helping them. Aided and abetted by SAS operative Ryan James, the two battle worldwide terrorists and criminals.

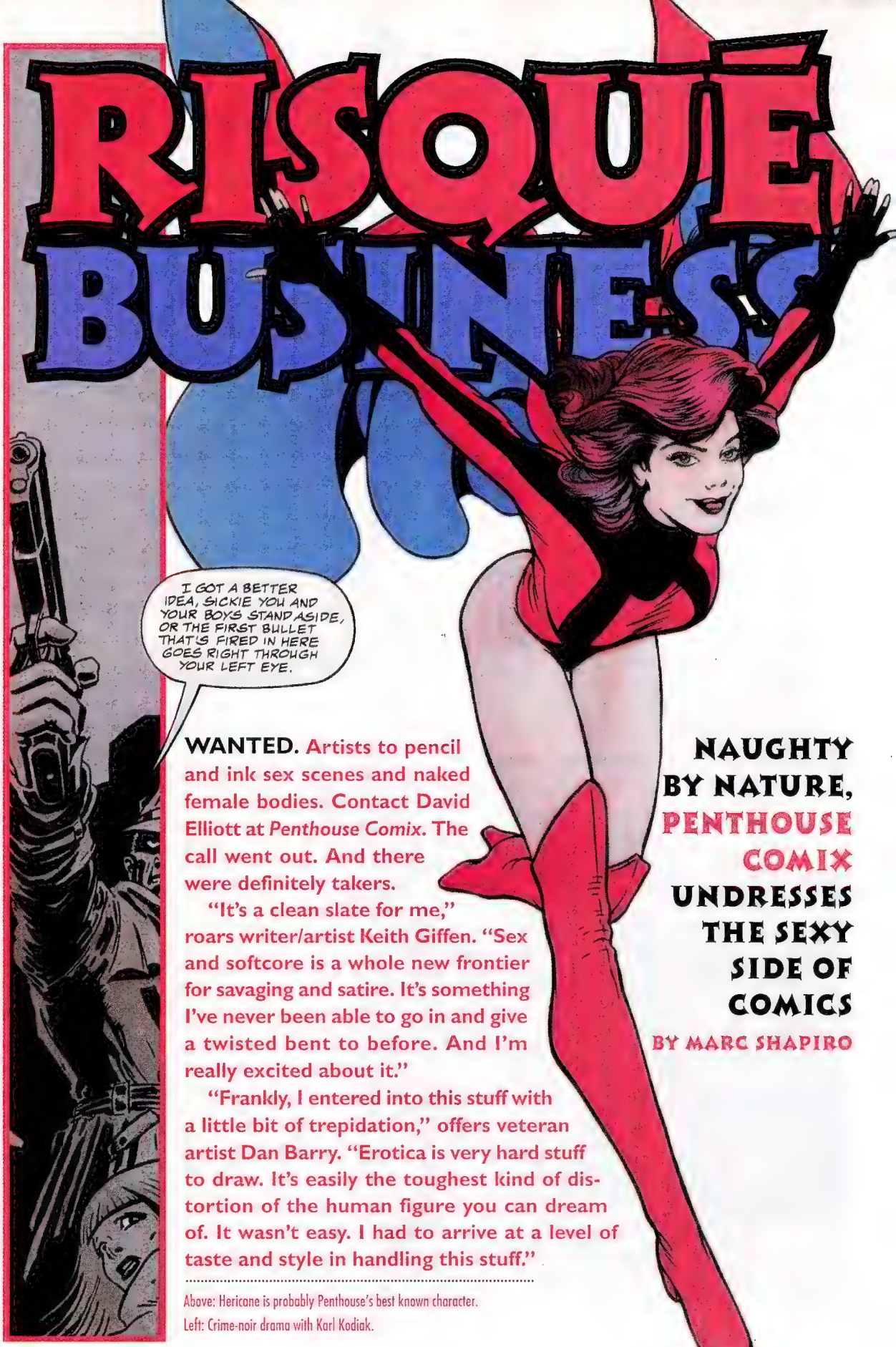
"The thrust of this book is going to be high-action adventure stories out of the themes of James Bond and Jon Sable," Grell explains. "Maggie operates in a world of serious worldwide terrorism and deals with nasty people who have absolutely no scruples about pulling the trigger when necessary. Maggie's a good-looking woman and there will be some chemistry between her and Ryan. But I intend for the stories and the characters to carry this book and not the sex."

The first four-issue story arc will concentrate on reintroducing Maggie the Cat and her world to readers. But Grell laughingly warns that a character from Maggie's past will be making a return visit in issues #5-#8. "I think readers would be disappointed if I didn't bring Jon Sable back one last time to have his ass kicked one more time by Maggie."

Marc Shapiro never stole a thing in his life. Except for third base when he was in little league, that is.

BY MARC SHAPIRO

RISQUE BUSINESS



NAUGHTY BY NATURE, PENTHOUSE COMIX UNDRESSES THE SEXY SIDE OF COMICS

BY MARC SHAPIRO

WANTED. Artists to pencil and ink sex scenes and naked female bodies. Contact David Elliott at *Penthouse Comix*. The call went out. And there were definitely takers.

"It's a clean slate for me," roars writer/artist Keith Giffen. "Sex and softcore is a whole new frontier for savaging and satire. It's something I've never been able to go in and give a twisted bent to before. And I'm really excited about it."

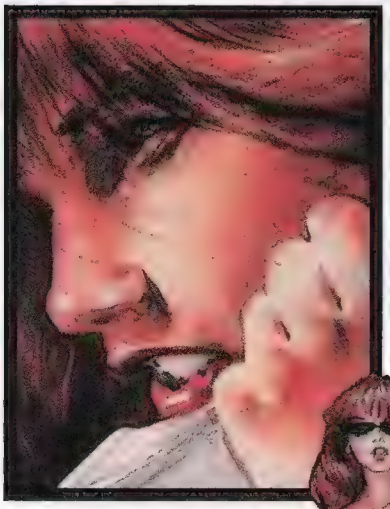
"Frankly, I entered into this stuff with a little bit of trepidation," offers veteran artist Dan Barry. "Erotica is very hard stuff to draw. It's easily the toughest kind of distortion of the human figure you can dream of. It wasn't easy. I had to arrive at a level of taste and style in handling this stuff."

Above: Hericane is probably Penthouse's best known character.
Left: Crime-noir drama with Karl Kodiak.

"I wouldn't necessarily call up somebody who has been working on *Archie* for the past 20 years," chuckles David Elliott, the recently appointed editor-in-chief at *Penthouse Comix*. "Unless I knew that they were frustrated at not being able to do something like this." In fact, longtime *Archie* artist Dan DeCarlo took his shot in early issues of *Penthouse Comix* with his strip called "Pets."

A who's who of comic types must be frustrated because during the two-year run of *Penthouse Comix* (including its sister heart stopper, the bimonthly *Penthouse Men's Adventure Comix*), the likes of creators like Adam Hughes, Dan Barry, Kevin Maguire, Keith Giffen, Mark Texeira and Matt Haley have run into the arms of *Penthouse*. And for Elliott, who came to *Penthouse* after a long career of drawing and inking on both sides of the Atlantic, this comes as no surprise.

"There are a lot of people who work in comics who, if you look at their work, you can tell like drawing women. Those were the people we called first and we found that the idea of drawing naked people in sexual situations was a big attraction for a lot of people. After all, this is not *Spider-Man* or *The Transformers*."



Penthouse magazine already had a long history of being comics friendly with its risqué strips "Wicked Wanda" and "Sweet Chastity" (as does *Playboy* with its classic "Little Annie Fanny" strip), and so it is not surprising that the magazine's publisher Bob Guccione began considering a full-time comic book line in 1992 and finally agreed to get the presses going in '94. The late George Caragonne, with a Marvel/Valiant background, was the first editor. The current editor offers that, from the beginning, *Penthouse Comix* was on a well defined course.

"It was always intended to be a girly, sexy, X-rated comic," says Elliott. "Our goal from the beginning was to make Marvel comics with breasts."

Above: "Scully and Mulder" have a close encounter in the "X-Files" parody.
Below Left: Mark Texiera lent his talents to *Men's Adventure Comix* #1.
Below: Bang Bang takes no crap in the regular series "Action Figures."

The X-rated part is pretty evident. The recently published "X-Files" parody, "The Sex Files," pretty much tells the tale. But there's more to *Penthouse Comix* than a hormone-driven case of T&A. Like continuing adventures with regular characters.

"Young Captain Adventure" chronicles the adventures of the son of a dead superhero who travels to New York. There he encounters a mercenary group of superheroes called Team Supreme whom he attempts to morally clean up. "Doctor Dare" is a sexy bit of Doc Savage styled action which features a World War II superwoman who fights super Nazis with powers that she only gets after having sex. Another plotline, "Action Figures," tells the story of four girls who like to have fun but, when they need the money, hire themselves out for whatever pays the rent. "Bethlehem Steele" tells the story of a future world where a female android is trying to come to terms with who and what she is. And it is these imaginative, albeit sexually explicit adventures, that have struck the fancy of the artists in the *Penthouse* camp.

"I've had no qualms about working for *Penthouse* because it allows me to plant my tongue firmly in my cheek," says Keith Giffen. "It's all satire. I'm not doing a *Tijuana Bible* [a notorious hardcore pornographic comic book] and I won't do bondage. I don't consider myself a pornographer. Every other panel is not a sex shot and we're not just stopping the story to show a sex organ. What we're doing is funny and edgy. What I'm doing for *Penthouse* is an odd little genre that I've never had the chance to flail around in before."

Barry—who has been with *Penthouse Men's Adventure Comix* from the beginning with the ongoing western serial "Slim & Nun"—takes his *Penthouse* work in stride. "I've had to sharpen my skills with female anatomy but, beyond that, any assignment is an assignment.

Penthouse, in terms of the morals and execution, is miles ahead of most of the crap out there. This is satire. It's a lot like *Mad* magazine stuff."

Elliott, however, reports that *Penthouse Comix* is currently in a state of transition. "My take on *Penthouse Comix* is different from the previous editors. Before, the comics were basically one man's vision and all the strips

Left: "Young Captain Adventure" pokes fun at DC's Superboy and the comic book medium.
Below right: Dan Barry's art from the regular series "Slim & Nun."
Bottom: Moebius takes a swing at a classic DC character.

were written by the same in-house people. It used to be that reading a *Penthouse* comic was almost like watching a porno film. The stories were always a flimsy way to get somebody to take their clothes off and then get right into the action. That is hopefully going to be a thing of the past."

The editor says that the first change will be to reduce the amount of in-house material considerably and that future issues will wrap up the ongoing storylines. "Every strip has been a soap opera with no end in sight. You don't want readers saying, 'Well I've been buying this magazine for two years and none of the stories have finished.' We're going to be doing a lot of one- and two-issue stories but nothing like what's at Marvel where the stories never end."

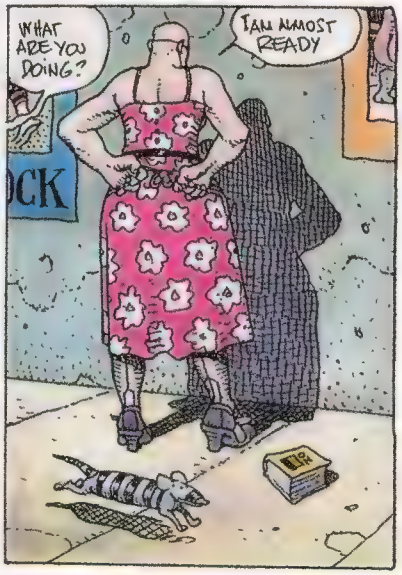
But Elliott says that any changes at *Penthouse Comix* will not gloss over the basic intent of *Penthouse*. "I know why people are buying *Penthouse*. They want to see sex. That's great and I have every intention of keeping the sexual tension. The readers will continue to see naked women but they'll also get a great story as well. And the stories, for the most part, won't be the dark, grim, dirty Vertigo style stories. We won't do bondage or bow-down-before-me kinds of stories. We will do cheesecake. The stories have to be fun and entertaining."

The fact that *Penthouse Comix* is dancing on the cutting edge of sexual content and taste is much in evidence in its *Mad* magazine-like approach. The "Sex Files" parody, featuring a realistically drawn Scully doing the deed would seem to be begging for legal action but Elliott claims that—so far—*Penthouse* has been lawsuit proof.

"We basically fall under the same law as *Mad* magazine. It's a one-shot, a parody and a satire. We didn't put that 'Sex Files' story on the cover and we did not solicit the book that way. All we're doing is poking fun. The only difference is that we're poking fun in a harder way."

"I truly believe in what they're doing," says Barry. "Forty years ago I was working for a small publisher and they wanted me to do a porno book and they wanted to pay this whopping fee. But at that time I wouldn't think of it. But *Penthouse* is a different thing all together. If I didn't believe in this, I wouldn't be doing it. I don't need the money that desperately."

Marc Shapiro truly enjoyed researching this feature.



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LETTER PERFECT

HOW TO LETTER A COMIC BOOK IN SEVEN EASY STEPS

If it's noticed, it's bad.

That's a popular sentiment about comic book lettering. But it's not Todd Klein's sentiment. While many believe that lettering should be invisible for the overall enjoyment of a comic book, Klein says, "I've heard that for years, and I believed it for years. Then, suddenly, letterers began getting noticed for what they were doing, and I thought to myself: 'This is better!' So I don't believe that anymore. I think it's possible for letterers to be just as important as anyone else and be noticed as much as anyone else."

Todd Klein, letterer extraordinaire.

For those not in the know, the letterer is the guy or gal who writes all the dialogue, captions and sound effects on the comic book page. If you stop to think about it, that's an extremely important job, one that calls for more than just impressive skills.

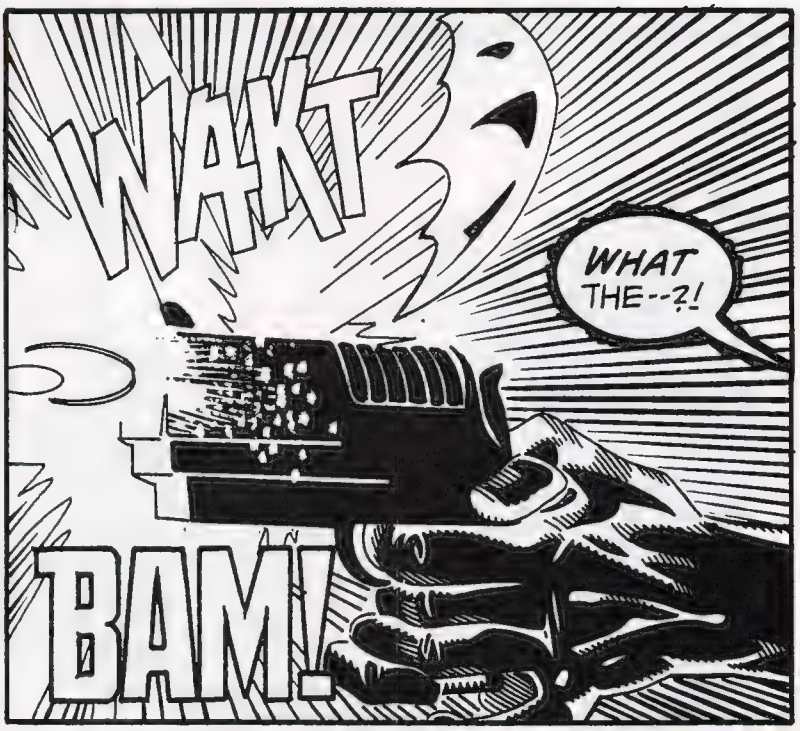
Klein, winner of three Eisner Awards, three Harvey Awards and a *CBG* Award for lettering, is arguably the best letterer in comics today. And now he'd like to divulge trade secrets that explain the hand-lettering process for those of our readers who might want to give this underappreciated artform a whirl. Take 'er away, Todd...

By Paul J. Grant with letterer Todd Klein

1. THE RIGHT EQUIPMENT

You'll need a couple of technical pens—like Rapidograph or Kohinoor or Faber-Castell—which have a reservoir or cartridge for ink. The most useful line weights (i.e., the thickness of the ink line) are 1.0 to 2.5. For thicker lines, you should use a dip pen, like a Speedball or Hunt. Some dip pens have a wedge tip, which allows you to do both thick and thin lines. That's been a popular style at Marvel, for example, over the last 10 years or so; check your favorite Marvel comic to see how the line width of the letters varies. You should note that a lot of professional letterers actually file down the pen point to get the kind of wedge they want, and it takes some practice.

Of course, you need a good bottle of jet-black India ink. You'll also need an Ames lettering guide, a drawing board, circle and oval templates, and a 30-60-90 degree triangle, along with a T-square to keep everything square and lined-up horizontally on your board. You can find all of the above in any good art supply store.



A lettered and inked comic book panel at actual size.

PHOTOS BY ROB KINMONTH

2. PLACE WORD BALLOONS

The letterer begins his work by taking the script supplied by the writer and the actual artwork, and deciding where to place the word balloons and captions. (The penciler leaves room inside each panel for the letterer to add the balloons and captions.) Word balloons are any type of speech enclosure in which dialogue is located, while captions are usually placed in rectangular boxes.

Sometimes the artist, writer or editor will indicate where to place the balloons, but most editors trust my judgment, and I always have the option of rethinking the suggestion and moving things around if I think it will look better. I letter pages on the actual original penciled art before it's inked, but half the time I'm working on overlays made of vellum (a thicker version of tracing paper) placed on photocopies of either penciled, inked or painted art. That's done to speed things up, so the letterer and inker or colorist can be working at the same time, and the results are put together in the company's production department.

3. USE THE AMES LETTERING GUIDE TO DRAW GUIDELINES AND SET THE LETTER SIZE

The Ames lettering guide is a small plastic tool used to quickly create guidelines for lettering. The guide has an adjustable wheel with a series of holes in it. Once properly set, you place your pencil in one of the holes and drag the guide back and forth along your T-square, moving your pencil to the next hole after each pass. Most letterers work with the Ames guide set on three, although some letterers letter as large as four or five and some go down to two.

Laying out the page. Note the script and notes (above) from the editor. The Ames guide in action (above and at left).

4. MENTALLY ARRANGE THE WORDS IN WORD BALLOONS AND CAPTIONS AS YOU GO

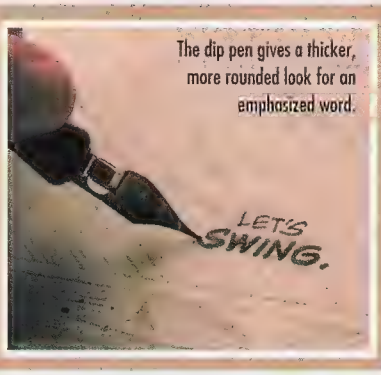
The writer decides how many words go in a balloon, although sometimes I have to break up large chunks of dialogue. As for how many words per line, the more you do it, the easier it gets to see how it's going to break and where the lines are going to fall, so that you get a rounded shape. When there are too many words for the panel (the balloon gets in the way of the artwork), you can make the letters narrower, or break the edges of the panel to give yourself more space, or move some text into a different panel. Those solutions are generally used only as a last resort, and fortunately aren't called for too often. In the worst situations, I call the editor and we work something out together.

Todd lettering dialogue with a technical pen.

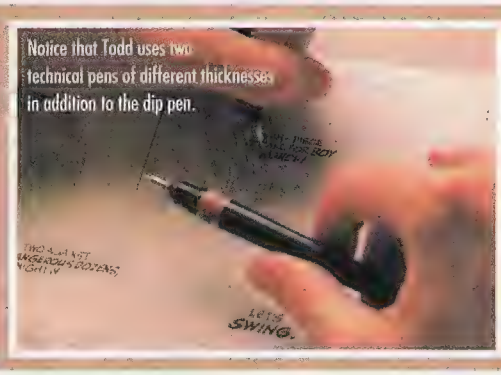
5. DRAWING THE ACTUAL LETTERS

I work directly in ink. I use technical pens for regular lettering, and I use dip pens for special effects and very large letters. You draw in the letters first, and the outline of the word balloon comes later (see Step #7). For calligraphy styles, for example, I use a dip pen with a wedge tip that gives me some variety of line weight. The lettering style depends on what the writer has in mind. In a superhero book there usually isn't too much call for fancy styles, although sometimes the villains get a special

style, but in Vertigo's *The Sandman*—where the characters all have unique personalities and styles—the writer Neil Gaiman really encourages it. Last time I counted, there were over 30 distinct lettering styles in *Sandman*. Most recently, I researched William Shakespeare's own writing to develop a style for *Sandman* #75 ("The Tempest").



The dip pen gives a thicker, more rounded look for an emphasized word.



Notice that Todd uses two technical pens of different thicknesses in addition to the dip pen.

6. ADDING SOUND EFFECTS AND TITLES

Those are generally provided by the writer, and go in after everything else. For sound effects, we have to come up with something that fits the sound and the story. It comes from practice and seeing what people have done before and trying to come up with something new. Everyone has their own solutions to these problems. I can't think of any particularly clever sound effects solutions I've developed myself, but I admire other people's work. I think Tom Orzechowski's sound effects on Image Comics' *Spawn* are particularly creative. That's a case where he was practically given free reign to do whatever he thought looked good, and it made the book really shine. A lot of letterer John Workman's sound effects are actually created from very small lettering, which is blown up and traced to get that freehand look, which I find very effective. That's all part of the creative end of lettering—sound effects, signage, titles and logos—which are therefore more fun.

For sound effects such as this "WHAM!," Todd first pencils the outline, then, using a triangle as a straight-edge, he inks the lines, connecting the short strokes freehand. For added emphasis/exclamation, Todd adds a thick rough-hewn outline.

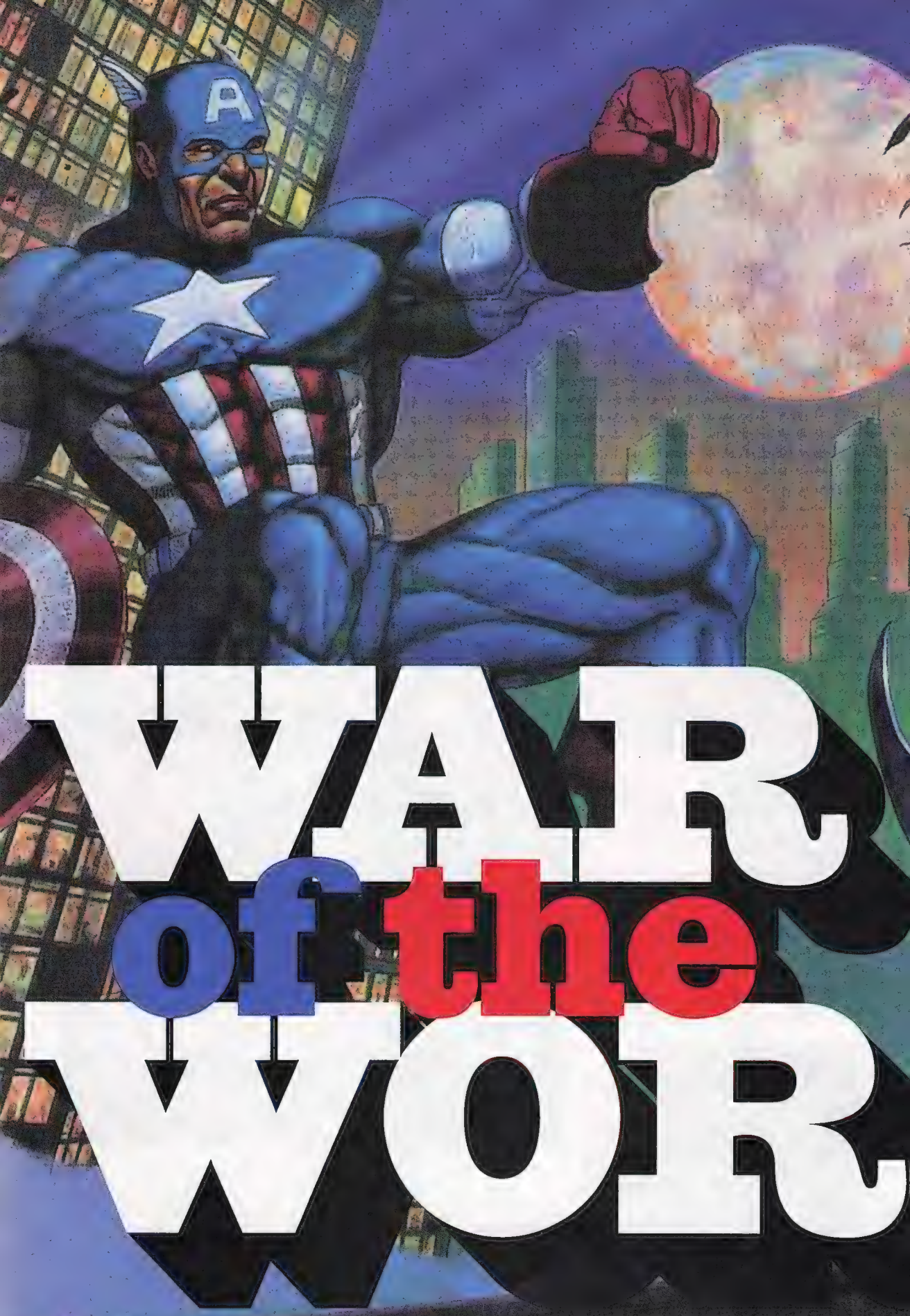
7. THE BALLOONS AND FINAL DETAILS

Once all the letters are in place, the balloons and caption blocks are drawn in ink around them. Word balloons can be drawn by hand if you're brave about that. Some letterers use commercially available templates; I generally use oval and circle templates of various sizes. I use the triangle and T-square for caption borders, and—if they haven't already been done by the inker—I draw the panel borders in ink as well. And that's that.

After using an ellipse template to trace the balloon's outline (above), Todd adds a hand-drawn "heavy" outer line (at left) to give the balloon added punch.

So with what Todd has detailed here, anyone interested in taking up lettering as a craft should be more in tune with the basics. Lettering, like any other comics-related skill, definitely takes talent, but as Klein observes, "Practice and patience are more important in lettering than artistic ability." Then again, having all three is even better.

Todd Klein is an award-winning letterer on numerous titles including The Sandman *and* Batman, *as well as a heckuva nice guy. Paul J. Grant, meanwhile, has decent penmanship at times.*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LDS

The inside scoop on the Marvel/DC crossover battles plus who will win and why

By Buddy Scalera

"Superman will and should win over Hulk," says Dan Jurgens, matter of factly. "Batman will win, Captain America should win. Wolverine will win, Lobo should win. Wonder Woman should win, Storm will win. Spider-Man will win, Superboy should win. We have to look at this from two standpoints: who I think *will* win and who I think *should* win."

Strong words. One might even say them's fightin' words. And they are. As the co-penciler on the *Marvel vs. DC* four-issue "Showdown of the Century," Jurgens is undoubtedly opinionated. Of course, he's not alone, as the event has both fans and pros picking favorites across company lines.

And why not? This crossover, which begins in December, is the ultimate fighting challenge, larger than anything you'll see on Pay-Per-View. Bigger than the Super Bowl or the World Series—they happen every year. Bigger even than the Olympics—every two years. This is an event over 30 years in the making with two opposing universes duking it out on the battlefield.

And the kicker of this fanboy dream-come-true is that Marvel and DC Comics are upping the ante by letting the comic book fans determine the outcome of five key contests. Contests where both publishers will throw their best out into the arena.

Among the bone-rattling battles left in the hands of the fans are Superman vs. Hulk, Batman vs. Captain America, Lobo vs. Wolverine, Superboy vs. Spider-Man, and Wonder Woman vs. Storm.

The last time fans were allowed to vote on the outcome of a major story, Robin died in an explosion set by the Joker. Fans voted via a 900-number to make instant history in 1988, as the story remains a milestone in comic book lore. One hopes that this time the results will be a little kinder.

And the results will be genuine, notes mini-series co-writer Ron Marz. "I can assure everybody that if Batman outvotes Captain America, or Spider-Man outvotes Superboy, those are the results you will see in the third issue [due out in February]. There won't be any fudging of the results. Fans are going to get what they ask for."

And much, much more. The creative team for the mini-series is top notch. Co-writing along with Marz (*Green Lantern*) is *The Incredible Hulk*'s Peter David. The two will split the writing chores evenly—Marz will write issues #1 and #3, David issues #2 and #4. Jurgens, the

man who killed Superman, will split the penciling chores with rising superstar Claudio Castellini who is touted by industry insiders as "The Todd McFarlane of Italy." Inks will be by respected veterans Joe Rubenstein and Paul Neary.

One thing creators will have a say over are the half-dozen "undercard" battles. Among them are Quicksilver and Flash, Thor and Captain Marvel, Jubilee and Robin, Sub-Mariner and Aquaman, Silver Surfer and Green Lantern, and Elektra and Catwoman. Marz even alludes to other unpublicized battles: "We also get glimpses of other meetings that are taking place, like Iron Man and Steel, and Archangel and Hawkman." Needless to say, both publishers are cagey about who will win them.

For David, who is also *Aquaman*'s scribe, the battle between Sub-Mariner and Aquaman was a favorite. "I always thought they were very cool characters. I go back to my scrapbooks and my sketchbooks [from] when I was 12 years old, and I've got the two slugging it out," he explains.

But more often than not, the conversation turns over to the Big Battle Royal. "The more icon type characters like Spider-Man, Superman and Batman will probably win their respective battles," says Marz. "I think Hulk vs. Superman is going to be interesting because you've got arguably the two most physically powerful characters in their respective universes wailing the hell out of each other."

Castellini has one universe in mind as the victor. "I would like to see all of Marvel's heroes win, with the exception of Batman, who is one of my favorite characters," he says. "And the Superman vs. Hulk to end in a tie."

Marvel and DC, predicting the epic power struggle, quickly pulled out their Big Guns to lead the charge in the mammoth crossover battle. Veteran editor Mark Gruenwald (nicknamed The Grue) will lead Marvel into the front lines. He faces DC editor Mike Carlin (The Great Carlini), who was once an assistant to Gruenwald.

When the ideas were fleshed out, all the creators—with the exception of Castellini, who lives in Italy—met to discuss the plot of the story. Then things got ugly.

Quickly, Gruenwald and Carlin got territorial. They chided each other about their respective characters. Someone threw down the gauntlet and their cordial relationship deteriorated.

Wizard met the legendary editors in the offices of DC Comics to get an exclusive look at the battle behind the battle. What follows is a spirited discussion between Carlin and Gruenwald on the greatest comic book tussle of all time and the vote that will decide who will win it all...

FIGHTIN' WORDS

WIZARD: Who came up with this idea?

Carlin: Every single reader of every single comic book came up with this idea. This has been the battle that everyone on the planet Earth has been wanting and asking for.

How did you pull it off?

Carlin: Well, we ain't pulled it off yet, but we're on the brink. DC is trying to triumph over Marvel once and for all. After 10 long months working behind the scenes—acting like I *like* these guys at Marvel—we managed to get the comic book of the century on the stands.

Gentleman Gruenwald

How did you choose your artists for this visual undertaking?

Carlin: Dan Jurgens and I go way back. We've done some big things in comics before and I knew that Dan Jurgens, the man who killed Superman, was the man who could kill Marvel.

Gruenwald: After due consideration, we checked with all the top artists America had to offer; we found that America wasn't big enough for this project alone. We had to go all the way to Italy where we found Claudio Castellini, who had been doing covers for various Marvel books such as *Fantastic Four Unlimited* and *Cosmic Powers Unlimited*.

Carlin: We came up with the basic premise for the whole story and the creative team—the writers and the artists—has made it their own story.

Killer Carlin

Gruenwald: They were incredibly inventive and they found a way to take our basically simple idea and imbue it with many levels of complexity and interest.

Why not wait until the summer when most crossovers occur?

Carlin: We like to do things a little different up here in the big leagues. We figured why hold back on the greatest fight of all time? Who knows, if this goes over big maybe we'll have another one by summer.

So how do the characters meet up and why are they fighting each other?

Carlin: The motivation for all of this tussling is that a couple of cosmic entities—basically within a flash of a thought—let every single person on both worlds know that if these characters do not fight, their world might disappear. When everything is all said and done, there will only be one universe left.

Gruenwald: These cosmic guys are very powerful. They precede the Big Bang. They are older than everybody, smarter than everybody and, by golly, everybody likes them. They are—for lack of a better term—twins or brothers or extra dimensional stunt doubles.

Why not just use Thanos, Galactus and Darkseid?

Gruenwald: Been there, done that.

Carlin: Because they might have come to this conclusion a long time ago. This is something bigger than anything you've seen in the DC or Marvel Universe.

Gruenwald: Also, they didn't have the power. We purposely tried to make a step up beyond

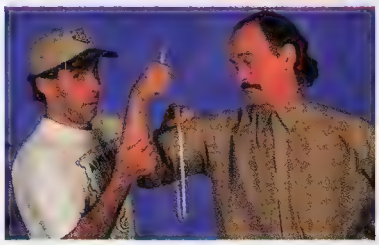
TALE OF THE TAPE

MIKE CARLIN

Place of Birth: Brooklyn, N.Y.
Date of Birth: 10/06/58
Nickname: The Great Carlini
Occupation: DC Universe Executive Editor
Height: 6'1"
Weight: 230 lbs.
Reach: 29"
Biceps: 14.5"
Editing arm from elbow to forefinger: 16"
Fist size holding pen: 11.5" (Editing Hand)
Head: 22"
Favorite Mexican Dish: Margaritas

MARK GRUENWALD

Place of Birth: Oshkosh, Wis.
Date of Birth: 6/18/53
Nickname: The Grue
Occupation: Marvel Executive Editor
Height: 5'9"
Weight: 150 lbs.
Reach: 28.75"
Biceps: 28" (with some help)
Editing arm from elbow to forefinger: 14"
Fist size holding pen: 10" (Editing Hand)
Head: 22.5
Favorite Mexican Dish: Fajitas



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any cosmic character that had previously appeared in both of our collected canons.

Are these new characters sticking around?

Carlin: You're going to have to read the end of the story to find out.

What're their names?

Gruenwald: They don't have names because they are so integrated with their respected universes that they have never needed to differentiate themselves from anybody or introduce themselves to anybody so they've never needed names. So call them The Nameless Ones.

THE CHALLENGERS

How did you narrow down all of your great characters to the few that were chosen?

Carlin: Everybody knows who the great characters at both companies are. It really was just a matter of writing it down and there was no question as to which characters would be battling for the honor of top comic book company.

Gruenwald: We had to figure out the appropriate matches. Obviously, Hulk could take any of DC's characters, but we wanted to pit him against only somebody that would give him the semblance of a reasonable fight. The same thing with most of our characters. They could beat any three DC characters but we tried to match most of them in such a way that the DC guys would at least be able to make a reasonable showing for a couple of pages before they got trounced.

Carlin: And we let Marvel have their fun. We let them pick their cream of their crop, so to speak. But talk is cheap. The action will play out. The world will know that DC has it all. Superman could beat all of the characters in the Marvel Universe.

Gruenwald: He died, pal.

Carlin: ...and he beat death and came back to fight another day.

Gruenwald: Did you ever break a little ceramic statue and try to glue it back together...it's never as strong as it was. He was broken, he was defeated. He was lucky to have squeaked by out of death's round once. Do you think he could do it again? I don't think so.

Let's get down to it then. Who's stronger: Superman or the Hulk?

Carlin: Superman.

You sure? The Hulk is one of the most powerful characters in the Marvel Universe.

Carlin: If you've been checking DC Comics Online on America Online you'll see that that's pretty much everybody's instant answer at this point.

What's his advantage?

Carlin: He's superhuman. Hulk, no matter how much you morph him, irradiate him, tint him, he is still just a human. A puny human.

Gruenwald: The Hulk started out as mortal, not a stupid alien. There is no upper limit to his strength. He can exponentially keep growing in strength depending on how enraged he gets. If the battle lasts long enough he could be stronger than Superman. But Superman will probably cheat and use his X-ray vision and irradiate [Hulk's] underpants.

Can't the Hulk snap and revert back into Bruce Banner?

Gruenwald: That could happen, yes.

So the Hulk has an Achilles heel.

Carlin: Mark is ridiculous. He would say that anger is an advantage in any bout. Cool, calm, logistical fighting...

Gruenwald: Much like Superman with Doomsday. Or should I say Dumbsday?

Carlin: Superman is back and Doomsday is not. Case closed.

Why drag in other characters and not save them for another crossover?

Gruenwald: Because this is the crossover to end all crossovers. This one has all the characters meeting all the other characters; it's not like we're gonna do our A-team characters this year and our B-team characters next year. We just mixed them all together.

Carlin: This is the meeting of both universes that includes the heavyweights, middleweights, the lightweights. It's like a regular boxing match. There are preliminary bouts in any big event.

What're the most evenly matched fights?

Gruenwald: The most evenly matched battle is Batman and Captain America. Captain America has years more fighting experience than Batman. He relies only on one weapon—his shield, which can be used for defense and offense. He also does not tire, thanks to the super-soldier serum in his blood. Batman has multiple weapons—he can always cheat by pulling something else.

Above: Superboy vs. Spider-Man
Below: The Hulk tangles with Superman

Carlin: It's not cheating if you use your regular bag of tricks.

Gruenwald: If he throws a stink bomb capsule, Captain America can hold his breath for several minutes.

Carlin: Long enough for Batman to hit him harder.

Gruenwald: Since there's no Adamantium in your universe, Cap's shield will be able to cut through anything that Batman whips around him. I think this is going to be a close one because these are possibly the best non-superpowered combatants of both universes. They are both so good at what they do, but I'd still give Captain America the fighting edge because of one word alone: experience.

Carlin: Forget holding your breath, forget never tiring. Batman will never stop.

Gruenwald: Except, once again, my broken china doll analogy. He's had his back broken.

Mark, what's Marvel's main advantage?

Gruenwald: Spider-Man. There is not a way Superboy is gonna outvote him, I'm sorry. Spider-Man and Wolverine are definitely gonna take it, just because they are better known, better

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EXPERT OPINIONS

If the professionals in the comics industry are as good at predicting boxing matches as they are at producing four-color entertainment, then DC has the edge in this cross-universe fight. The pros *Wizard* talked to gave the DC hero the victory in three out of five of the major battles, with only Spider-Man and Wolverine seen as the Marvel winners in their respective fights.

"I think it'll probably end up with Superman as the winner," says writer/artist George Pérez (*Silver Surfer*). "Superman has a big arsenal of powers beyond superstrength, but the Hulk is strictly brute strength." *Impulse* and *Captain America* scribe Mark Waid put it even more bluntly: "Superman—anyone with heat vision beats anyone else, no matter who it is. Heat vision is a lock."

The only dissenter on this one is *Excalibur* writer Warren Ellis, who says, "Hulk. Genius-level intellect versus alien farmboy."

The Batman/Captain America face-off was the toughest to call, although Batman came out with a better than two-to-one advantage among our judges. *Power of Shazam!* writer Jerry Ordway puts it this way: "My preconceptions are that Cap is more powerful, but Batman's got an edge to where, in a pinch, he'll fight dirty."

Still, Cap has his supporters, among them writer/artist John Byrne (*Wonder Woman*) and writer Kurt Busiek (*Astro City*). Byrne notes, "This is where I apply my specialist rule—while Batman is the world's greatest detective, Cap is the world's greatest fighter." Busiek adds, "Never mind the utility belt, never mind the shield. It's a Jack Kirby super-soldier vs. a Bob Kane crimefighter—the super-soldier wins."

Wonder Woman will have a tougher time defeating Storm, however, according to our panel. "I'd say Storm wins, based on the ability to strike from a distance," says Superman writer David Michelinie. But Busiek boils it all down to the essence of the characters. "Storm's got weather powers, sneak-thief abilities and a few years of Danger Room training. Wonder Woman is the best Amazon there ever was. No contest."

While many of our professionals thought Lobo had an edge in the strength department, they gave the battle to Wolverine, often for very personal reasons. "I don't suppose we could *possibly* get lucky enough for them to kill each other, could we?" joked *Ghost Rider 2099*'s Len Kaminski. "I didn't think so." Mark Waid was a bit more blunt: "I hate Lobo, so I say Wolverine."

Finally, in the battle of clone against (maybe) clone, the amazing arachnid was given a definite edge over the kid with the "S" on his chest.

"I think Spider-Man. It's a case of experience over muscle. Superboy is not as tested and Spider-Man knows how to get it done," says Jerry Ordway. But Superboy does have his defenders, among them George Pérez and Warren Ellis. "Spider-Man might only have a chance because of his greater agility; you can't fight what you can't catch. I think I have to give this one to Superboy," Pérez says. Ellis wastes no words: "Superboy. High-powered cloneboy vs. rather crap cloneboy."

In general, however, the pros all expressed opinions similar to those of Peter David, co-writer of the big crossover mini-series. (David begged off predicting any winners, given that he's so involved.) "Whatever happens, I think we'll all be surprised by the results." ■ *Patrick Daniel O'Neill*

respected and better liked.

Mike, has Lobo seen his heyday?

Carlin: Lobo may have seen his heyday but everybody can come back from the brink and have the fight of their life. We've seen the Rocky movies. Wolverine may have a TV show on the air and he may win the popular vote, but a lot of people who are popular are not plain good.

What's Storm's strategy against Wonder Woman, who's a goddess?

Gruenwald: Storm was worshipped as a goddess too. She controls the weather. The weather is the strongest thing on Earth.

Can Wonder Woman match up to Storm?

Carlin: This is not even a contest. Storm is somebody who can't even hold her own title. She's part of a team, she needs her supporters.

Gruenwald: She's a *leader* of a team [the X-Men].

Carlin: Wonder Woman's led teams before too.

Gruenwald: Into cancellation.

PICKING UP THE PIECES

Will evidence from the fights remain in the respective universes?

Carlin: There is always a chance of that. Every time we start one of these crossovers, the first question the writers ask is if this is two separate universes or is this one universe? We've never had a consistent answer to that. At the end of this story there will be a consistent answer to that—there will be something left for both companies to use to get back and forth whenever we want to. That is going to be one of the more useful, more interesting and more exciting things to come out of this series.

What are the permanent repercussions?

Carlin: There will be a new character that comes out of this that will be a shared character between the DC and Marvel Universe.

Shared? How shared?

Carlin: We'll figure that out as we go along.

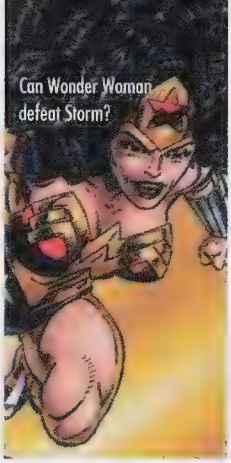
How much red tape was there?

Carlin: Editorially speaking, it's been very smooth. Some of the other departments that are involved—like marketing and production—have unfortunately some more realistic problems to deal with like money, and time and things like that. At the same time, DC and Marvel are having massive weekly meetings to make sure that everything goes smoothly on this. And it has been the greatest effort of cooperation I've ever seen.

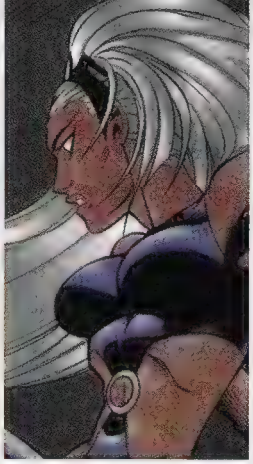
Are we going to see a kinder, friendlier relationship between Marvel and DC?

Gruenwald: Not unless Mike Carlin starts using better deodorant.

Carlin: And if Mark Gruenwald would trim those nose hairs, we might be more interested in playing games with them some more.



Can Wonder Woman defeat Storm?



MAKE WAR NO MORE?

Any final thoughts, predictions or anticipations?

Gruenwald: I think that this is going to be such a fun project and everyone is going to enjoy it so much that it's the readers who are going to be able to brag that they were there when it first came out and when it happened. They'll be able to talk for years that they saw the definitive battle of all time starring the 20th Century's most popular, powerful superheroes.

Parting shots

Carlin: Honestly, the motivation for this project is not to have one company be able to brag over the other company. One thing you learn working with characters like both of us do is that it's not whether you win or lose, it's how you play the game.

As far as this being a project that has never had any precedent before, there's been nothing like this. Judging from how hard it has been to put together and how sweeping it has been and how much red tape we have to cut through to get this to happen, it's gonna be a while before you see anything like this again. W

Buddy Scalera, Wizard's own Online Geek, is praying that Jarvis beats the livin' tar outta Alfred!

The beginning of the END...

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HARRIS COMICS

Mutant '902

The stars of a new generation: [top row] Suzanne Davis (Buff), Bumper Robinson (Mondo), Amarilis (Monet); [center] Randall Slavin (Refrax); [bottom row] Agustin Rodriguez (Skin), Heather McComb (Jubilee).

By Rob Allstetter

Will Fox's latest class project score high marks as Generation X graduates to TV?

Banshee, the taskmaster of Generation X, scans the cavernous Danger Room. Blue-green and white lights splash off the angled, 60-foot gray walls, giving off a swimming pool effect and accentuating the brightly colored teens he is training.

Refrax, the punky, blonde-haired kid sporting a plaid vest, T-shirt and shorts, maneuvers up the walls' many hand- and foot-holds, which look like oversized seashells.

Mondo, a large Samoan wearing an orange sweatshirt and pants, remains oblivious to the danger one of those hand-holds will soon cause him. And Monet, the group's Little Miss Perfect with her tight, mostly yellow jumpsuit and neon shoes, dutifully scales the wall.

Suddenly, Mondo slips from one hand-hold and grabs for another, only to discover it's a lever. He whirls around to see the lever has activated a gigantic log swinging for his face.

"Cut!" booms out Jack Sholder, director of the "Generation X" television movie.

Huddled on top of a platform 20 feet off the ground with several crew members, Sholder looks at Bumper Robinson, the young actor playing Mondo, who is grasping the tricky hand-holds for this close-up part of the scene. "I need 10 times more intensity," he implores.

Sholder's sense of urgency rings through the converted climbing center which serves as the Danger Room. He's been acting this way because the real-life performers are facing their own danger, and an everyday opponent in television: a demanding shooting schedule. It's a Monday in November, and "Generation X" is set to air on the Fox Network in February. That happens to be sweeps month; the air date was originally in mid-January, but Fox was so confident of the show's strength that it made this important move. (Check local listings for exact date and time.)

Really, the air date is *that* soon.

Or that far away, depending on how you look at things.

After three feature flops in the early 1990s, Marvel's back in the live-action business in a big way, now more closely controlling its film and television licenses. The Big M has several theatrical films in development, and "Generation X" (affectionately known by some insiders as "Mutant '90210' ") marks its first made-for-TV movie since 1990's "Death of the Incredible Hulk."

There's a lot at stake. With a budget of more than $4 million, the project could lead to more "Generation X" movies, maybe even a regular series. It could also mean more Marvel films from New World Enterainment on Fox, perhaps within the next six months. And it may get the can't-do-live-action-right monkey off Marvel's back.

Wizard spent two days in Vancouver, British Columbia, for a behind-the-scenes look at "Generation X," interviewing the producers, director and nine key cast members.

This is the eighth day of a 24-day shoot in Vancouver, a site used by more than a dozen television productions because it's inexpensive to film in Canada, and, as a local bus driver says, "It's a really cool place, eh." Crew and cast of nearly 100 bustle in and about the Edge Climbing Center.

It turns out to be a long day, too. Activity begins at 7:30 a.m. and, thanks in part to

a time-consuming stunt where Mondo displays his mutant power, doesn't end until after 10 p.m.

Eventually, it's stuntman Luke Waidman's turn—without the platform—to take the swinging log in the face for Mondo. The cast, rehearsing a card-game scene with writer/executive producer Eric Blakeney, gathers on the upper level of the building to watch. Stuntmen grab each other's belts, hanging on the edge of the balcony, ready to let the log, suspended by two rope/chains, fly at Mondo. Sholder reminds all in hearing range that it's the only log they have, so everyone must be ready.

Waidman wears a prosthetic mask to look more like Robinson and, unseen to the camera, is connected at the waist by a tether to the wall. The log is released—WHAM!—and it hits Waidman, who completes the scene (Mondo's face will turn to steel via special effects) and gives a thumbs-up that he's OK.

Everyone applauds.

Wait. One problem, Sholder notes. The log didn't break in two.

So, the scene is set up again. This time the log shatters, everyone applauds once more, and the results, as seen on screen the next day, are more than satisfactory.

"It's been very, very difficult to shoot on a television schedule," Sholder says later. "We're actually trying to do a feature film on one-sixth of the budget and a third of the schedule."

"If it works, there could be more Generation X movies, or a series, and the others will follow. But we are very focused on making 'Generation X' great."

—Bruce Sallan, Executive Producer

"Generation X" is Sholder's second experience with a comics property. He directed one of the early episodes of "Tales from the Crypt" for HBO. "Bill Gaines particularly enjoyed mine," Sholder says, referring to the comic's late creator. "He said it was in the spirit of the comic book."

Sholder wants to keep "Generation X" in the spirit of the comic, too, and realizes that it is a far cry from "Tales from the Crypt," or, for that matter, the other major superhero currently on live-action television.

"It's a lot different than Superman," he says. "It's a whole new generation of comic books. It has very, very dense images, where Superman is very simple."

Sholder says he's trying to bring a cinematic feel to "Generation X," thus the emphasis on the climbing mutants in the background. "We're going further visually with this show than anything that's been done on television," he says. "It has a tremendous amount of depth."

The legal eagles of New World Entertainment—the company producing the movie—won't let anyone outside the production have a script, so Blakeney takes a quick shuttle to his trailer to share a peek at the script he's written.

While reviewing daily film footage of banter between Emma Frost and Banshee, Blakeney, the creator of the show "21 Jump Street," gives his take on the film's story and dealing with young characters.

"Every teenager is a mutant, right?" he says. "I remember what it's like to be a teenager, and everything is wrong in your skin. That's what I like about the character Skin.

"Just the word skin. When you're a teenager, your skin feels so wrong. I found the metaphors really easy to hook up to. That's what I always loved about the Marvel world. All of the characters are incredibly flawed."

Blakeney met Marvel's Stan Lee 15 years ago when they shared the same agent, and the two have remained friends. Both were surprised when the fates of Hollywood brought them together professionally on "Generation X." They share executive producer titles, along with Marvel's Avi Arad and New World's Bruce Sallan.

While a direct translation of the comic is impossible, Blakeney says he steeped himself in Marvel mutant history for the film.

"In the early stages, they said, 'Blakeney, you're too true to the X-World. You're too detailed [in] the mutant lore. Loosen it up a bit,' " he recalls. "They thought it was suffering from over-saturation."

Complaints about a Marvel movie being too true to its source? Maybe, but there were a few necessary comics-to-television changes. The TV version of the "Generation X" team is led by Emma Frost and Banshee, who preside at the Xavier Institute (known in the comic as the Massachusetts Academy). Members include Jubilee, Skin, Mondo and Monet from the comics, along with two made-for-TV mutants, Refrax and Buff. Blakeney admits that a character like Chamber—with his reality-stretching bioblast powers—would simply be

Party games with mutants: Jubilee, Skin, Synch (who's not in the movie) and M have pushed many comic fans into their fun series.

too difficult to pull off on television.

Skeptics of the new characters should note that their codenames originate from *Generation X* comic creator/writer Scott Lobdell, a script consultant whom Blakeney says he called "any time I hit a wall." It's also possible Refrax and Buff will be appearing in the comics, and they are slated to be part of the toy line from Toy Biz.

Refrax has powers similar to Cyclops, although he can see through things, and Buff has incredible musculature—again fitting into the skin metaphor.

"She won't eat anything, and she virtually refuses to work out because if she works out really hard, everything starts to pop out on her," Blakeney says. "She's trying to keep her figure. She thinks she's this ugly fat whale and doesn't realize how great she looks, so she wears these sloppy clothes. It's a little process of self-discovery."

Self-discovery is just one of the subjects addressed in Blakeney's story, which he calls "allegory upon allegory." He lists such heady themes as alchemy, metaphysics, teen angst and commercialism, but a scan of the script reveals it to also be fun, and even sexy, with a lot of Lobdell-like interplay among the Gen X members.

The casting of these members and other characters, as is often the case in made-for-television movies, went down to the wire.

Blakeney, who had written for "Max Headroom," is delighted with getting Matt Frewer—the star of that series—to play the villain, Russell Tresh.

Tresh is a corporate maniac who has a past professional history with Emma Frost. He's bent on using Frost's "dream machine" to manipulate society through mind control. The Generation X squad must confront Tresh in the dreamscape, risking never returning to our reality.

Finola Hughes, the British actress who played Anna Scorpio on "General Hospital," stars as Emma Frost, and Canadian Jeremy Ratchford turns on the charming accent as Banshee. The rest of the cast consists of young performers whom you might recognize from their various film or television parts, but aren't household names...yet.

Back on the set, Finola Hughes arrives in full White Queen costume. A member of the crew comments on how professional Hughes is as she mouths her lines to herself off-camera and exercises her voice seconds before Sholder yells "Action!"

"Finola Hughes was absolutely my first choice," Blakeney says. "I knew we could get a beautiful woman. But if we didn't have someone whose voice would command absolute control, it wasn't going to work out."

When the scene begins, Emma, with help from Banshee, gathers the team in the Danger Room to give them final instructions before entering the dream dimension to confront Tresh and rescue Skin.

Sholder shoots the speech several times, at one time from a low angle that incorporates all eight performers. Randall Slavin, who plays Refrax, has to stand in just the right position closest to the camera to make the scene work. Apparently, his foot, in the wrong spot, could take up the whole frame.

"We're using the widest lens that's made," Sholder says, proud of this piece of film-making wizardry. "It's a 10-millimeter lens and costs $25,000. It's like a fisheye lens."

Then, with smoke and mirrors literally used to create the effect, the Gen X kids go through a portal created by Emma to the dreamscape. Teenagers coping just to get along in life must now confront a madman.

It's Tuesday afternoon—day nine if you're counting. The cast and crew are at a residential setting. Producer David Roessell sits in his trailer, telling one of the many callers on his cellular phone he'll be with them in a few minutes.

"For a project as difficult as this one, it's going excellently," he says. "It's very, very ambitious for television."

It's raining hard, typical for Vancouver this time of year. Roessell says plans were made to take into account all of the rain. An upcoming carnival scene will be shot indoors, but Roessell thinks a comics-inspired scene in which the Gen X kids play football might be enhanced by the wet mud outdoors.

"The young actors have terrific energy," he says. "If we can capture that on film, the show will sing."

You'll excuse Bruce Sallan if he's a bit schizophrenic. Sallan's a studio executive at New World *and* an executive producer for "Generation X"—an unusual double role.

"On the studio side, I say, 'You can't have a dollar more.' But then as executive producer I say, 'But I just need a little bit more for this scene,' " Sallan laughs. "So I get into these self-mutilating fights."

Sallan is serious about comics, reading a handful every night, and, after being hired by Brandon Tartikoff, also helping set up the Marvel/New World/Fox link. This connection includes Nick Fury and Black Widow movies, and possibly one for the Punisher, if that project doesn't materialize at NBC.

"There's not a single person in authority that does not respect this world," Sallan says of the Marvel Universe. "That's what is special about 'Generation X,' and why it's so important it turns out well.

"If it works, there could be more Generation X movies, or a series, and the others will follow. But we are very focused on making 'Generation X' great."

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Role Call

Above left: Tresh; above right: Frost; below: Banshee.

So, you may wonder, what's it like to play a mutant? How exactly does one get picked for the part? And more importantly, does anyone know how to get a copy of *Generation X* #3? *Wizard* learned the answers to those questions and more in our meet-the-cast session with the stars of "Generation X."

Matt Frewer—Russell Tresh

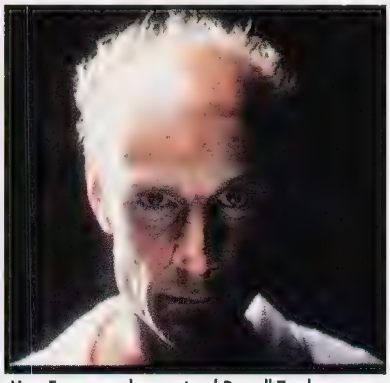
Eric Blakeney, writer and executive producer of "Generation X," says he thanked "the little mutant god" that he got Frewer, best known from the mid-'80s "Max Headroom" show, to play his wild villain.

"He is the naturally wittiest actor I've ever worked with," Blakeney says. "Had I known he would be in it, I would have just written 'Matt speaks' for his lines and let him make it up."

"It's a situation where they let me go, and it's great fun," Frewer says. "Eric is confident enough in his own material to unmuzzle me."

Says Frewer of his character: "He's very childish. He lives somewhat in his own head. He's kind of a genius gone wrong and is very spiteful.

"He's into mutant brain surgery," laughs Frewer, who will play a villain in the upcoming "Lawnmower Man" sequel. "And Emma does not like that scene, so they cross swords over that."



Matt Frewer as the maniacal Russell Tresh

Finola Hughes—Emma Frost

Even in the darkness off set, Hughes sparkles in full Emma Frost attire: blonde wig (over her brunette locks), silver tights, matching thigh-high boots, corset, jacket and plunging neckline. Not exactly what she had in mind when she signed up for "Generation X," unaware of the White Queen's fashion tastes.

"I feel like an aging Pamela Anderson," Hughes quips. "I keep waiting for Tommy Lee's dad to come over and ask for a date."

Along with Frewer, Hughes is the most known member of the cast, after stints on "General Hospital," "Jack's Place" and "Blossom." But even her most fervent fans might double-take at Hughes' Emma.

"It takes two hours with the hair, the makeup and clothes. We save the boots for last," she says. "The big discussion with the producers is about cleavage. We're always trying to stay true to the comics, but I'm a 34B and we're always pushing it up. I thought I should write lines on my cleavage, because that's all [the male fans are] going to be looking at."

Finola Hughes plays an excellent Emma.

Jeremy Ratchford—Banshee

"Banshee's like the uncle who lets you watch X-rated movies," Ratchford says of his character. "Or the grandfather who buys you ice cream even though your mom says you shouldn't have any. He's more warmly paternal than Emma—the good uncle Banshee."

Banshee is Ratchford's favorite X-Men character now—he carries a trading card of the character with him—but he's always liked another.

"The be-all and end-all for me in the X-Men is Wolverine. One, he's the only Canadian in the group, and I'm Canadian. Two, I was very close to getting his voice in the cartoon," Ratchford says, adding that he's extremely interested in playing Wolvie in the upcoming X-movie.

Heather McComb—Jubilee

Jubilee's got nothing on McComb in the sassiness department. Wearing a necklace with the word "Jubilee" and dyed-black hair, McComb was a New York dynamo on and off the set.

"My character's definitely the coolest," she says. "It's based on a comic book; how much cooler can you get?"

McComb, 18, made her acting debut at age 2 in a Publisher's Clearing House commercial. At 11, she was in the film "New York

Stories," starring in Francis Ford Coppola's part of the trilogy.

She faced the X-Men acid test when some youngsters approached her. "They asked, 'Are you Jubilee?' and I told them, 'Yeah,' " McComb recalls. "And they said, 'Cool, you look just like her!' I felt so good after that."

Suzanne Davis—Buff

Davis is in the spin cycle, rotating one way and then another in one of those pieces of astronaut training equipment that looks like a human gyroscope. It's the first time Davis has been in the contraption, but she pulls off the Danger Room sequence with ease.

"You are the axis, just like the Earth has an axis, so you don't feel dizzy," explains the 21-year-old Davis. "Your stomach doesn't spin. It's the organization of the force."

Davis even came up with her own name for the spinning gizmo. "The Personal Axial Rotator," she laughs. "Are you up to PAR? Get it?"

Amarilis—Monet

Does anybody have an extra copy of *Generation X #3*? Amarilis needs it to complete her run of the book. She started a collection after getting the role of Monet, which definitely impressed her fanboy brother.

"When I auditioned, I had on just jeans and a white shirt. I had never seen the comics, so I didn't know what the character looked like," Amarilis says. "They said, 'Can she wear something a little more form-fitting?' So I came back [with a new outfit], and everyone was laughing because they said I came right out of the comic book."

Randall Slavin—Refrax

Slavin's character is the other made-for-TV mutant. "He's an all-around frat, skate punk, lustful guy," Slavin says. "He realizes the brilliance of being able to see through things and burn holes through things. He then begins to realize that his powers should be used for better purposes than for sneaking peeks.

"They were originally going for a very specific, big, long-haired jock, and they didn't find him, so I guess they went back to the skinny, weak, short-haired guys and that's where they found me."

While other members of the cast frequently trained for their roles, that wasn't Slavin's scene. "I'd rather be watching cable," he laughs.

Agustin Rodriguez—Skin

Casting Skin was another last-minute decision for producers. Rodriguez got the part after a brief appearance on "New York Undercover."

"Fox said, 'Here's a guy for you. He looks good,' " says Blakeney. "He's such a low-key guy that he's almost asleep. But he came to the set alive and wonderful. Everybody breathed a huge thank you."

At 28, Rodriguez is the oldest of the cast. He's also a black belt in gojuand training to become a minister, and his demeanor seems a perfect fit for Skin.

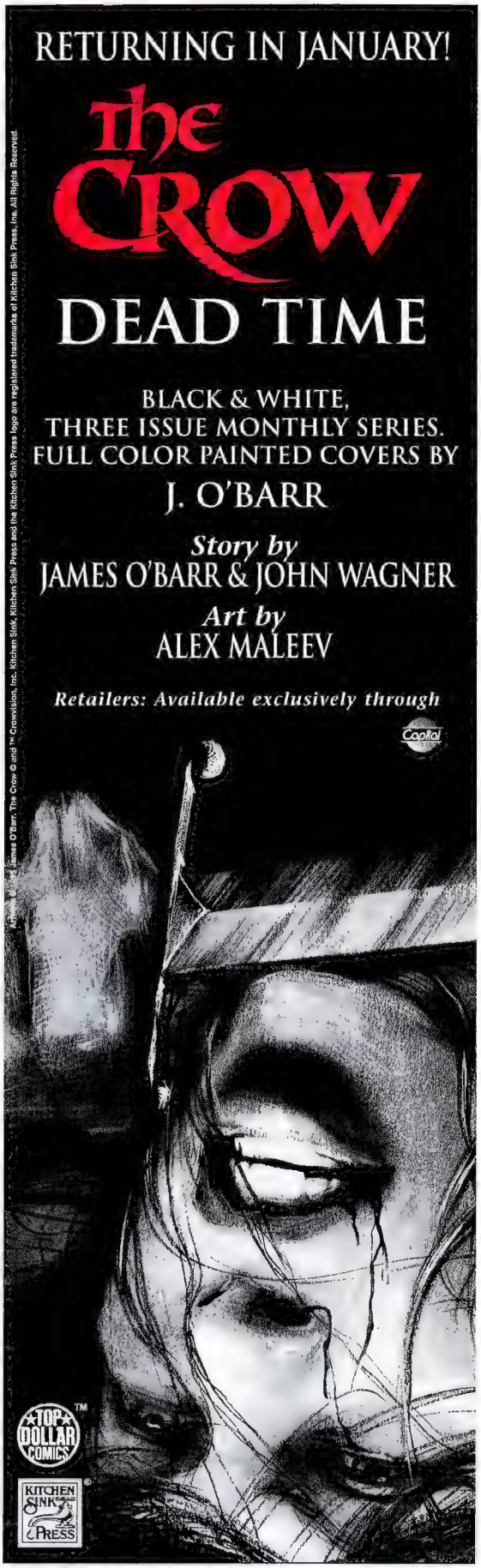
"After I read the script, I was excited. But after reading the comics, it was better and better," Rodriguez says. "He's smart—and he's also a smart aleck."

Bumper Robinson—Mondo

"[Mondo's] supposed to be a big Samoan and I'm neither," Robinson says. "Physically, he's very powerful, and although I'm not a big Samoan, I'm very powerful. I just have to act a little bit bigger."

Robinson, 21, who recently played a teenage O.J. Simpson in the Fox television movie, is another comic lover, with tastes ranging from the Punisher to Archie. He's aware of the following for Generation X.

"When you're able to become a part of that, it's special," he says. "Everybody reads the heck out of the comics." Just as everyone will surely be watching the heck out of the movie.



WHEN TITANS TUSSLE

TEN MORE OF THE GREATEST COMIC CROSSOVER BATTLES YOU'LL (PROBABLY) NEVER SEE COME TO LIFE THE WIZARD WAY!

BY JIM McLAUGHLIN

MOST FIGHTERS GET ONE MEASLY MINUTE BETWEEN ROUNDS. I'M LUCKY I GET IS MONTHS.

THAT'S HOW LONG IT'S BEEN SINCE "WHEN TITANS TUSSLE" CAME OUT, FEATURING OUR FIRST LOOK AT INTER-COMPANY CROSSOVER BATTLES (IN WIZARD #39, TO BE PRECISE). WE LINED UP COMBATANTS WHO COULD NEVER MEET DUE TO THE FACT THAT THEY WERE PUBLISHED BY DIFFERENT COMIC COMPANIES (LIKE DR. DOOM VS. LEX LUTHOR AND SWAMP THING VS. MAN-THING), AND LET THEM BATTLE IT OUT IN OUR PAGES TO SEE WHO WOULD WIN. THE SPIT FLEW, DON KING TOOK HIS CUT, AND I WOUND UP TAKING A FEW SHOTS MYSELF. WE GOT LOTS OF LETTERS RESPONDING TO "WHEN TITANS TUSSLE" WHICH DIFFERED WITH MY OPINIONS OF WHO WOULD WIN. (HONESTLY, PEOPLE WOLVERINE WOULDN'T STAND A CHANCE AGAINST LOBO. BELIEVE ME.)

BUT WE GOT EVEN MORE LETTERS TELLING US THAT THE ARTICLE WAS A LOT OF FUN AND THAT WE SHOULD DO IT AGAIN. WELL, ALL RIGHT. I'VE ALWAYS BEEN TOO STUPID TO KNOW BETTER, AND BY NOW I'M TOO PUNCH-DRUNK TO CARE. (REALLY, THOUGH—GREEN ARROW CAN TAKE HAWKEYE ANY DAY!) SO RING THE BELL AND...LET'S GET READY TO RUMBLE!

NOTE: JUST LIKE LAST TIME, NONE OF THE HEIGHTS, WEIGHTS, RECORDS OR OTHER STATS LISTED HERE COME FROM OFFICIAL SOURCES LIKE *THE OFFICIAL HANDBOOK OF THE MARVEL UNIVERSE* OR *WHO'S WHO*. I MADE 'EM UP. SO DON'T WRITE ANY LETTERS TELLING ME THAT BADROCK IS SUPPOSED TO BE AN INCH TALLER OR BATMAN'S 10 POUNDS TOO SKINNY. OKAY? THANKS.

OPPOSITE: NO CONTEST BETWEEN THE THING AND BADROCK

RIGHT: WHO WINS IN THE DUEL OF CLAWS—WOLVIE OR THE RIPSTER?

BADROCK

HOMETOWN: **Anaheim, Calif.**
HEIGHT: **7'8"** WEIGHT: **1,060 lbs.**
LOOKS LIKE HE'S MADE OF: **Granite. Granite with veins, that is.**
RECORD: **114-36-21**

VS. THING

HOMETOWN: **Yancy Street**
HEIGHT: **6'2"** WEIGHT: **790 lbs.**
LOOKS LIKE HE'S MADE OF: **Lots of little half-sucked-on Fannie Farmer rock candies all stuck together**
RECORD: **1,234-267-39**

Time to rock! This is also one of the most frequent battle requests we saw. Lots of readers want to see how the old guard of stony warrior would hold up against the new monolith on the block. No doubt about it—any way you cut it, this would be quite an earth-shaking matchup.

But when the rubble clears from this slugfest and the pebbles are swept away, there can be only one outcome: We're sorry, Mr. Rock, but the Thing is a bit faster and much smarter than you, so he scores the KO.

Yes, Badrock is probably stronger than the Thing. But just like in those classic old Hulk-Thing battles, speed and brains are Ben Grimm's primary weapons. Those may not have been enough to put the Thing over the top against Ol' Jade Jaws, but they'll undoubtedly be enough to dispatch the relatively untried Badrock. Badrock may have youth (and a backwards baseball hat) on his side, but the Thing has lived through years of fights and has tons of experience to draw on. Ultimately, it's the battle savvy of Aunt Petunia's favorite nephew that wins out here.

WOLVERINE

HOMETOWN: **Canada, I guess**
HEIGHT: **5'5"** WEIGHT: **265 lbs.**
CLAW LENGTH: **9 inches, or 21 inches when drawn by Frank Miller**
RECORD (wins-losses-ties): **2,042-409-44**

VS. RIPCLAW

HOMETOWN: **Los Angeles, Calif.**
HEIGHT: **6'3"** WEIGHT: **255 lbs.**
CLAW LENGTH: **8 inches, sometimes drawn 16 inches on covers for dramatic impact**
RECORD (wins-losses-ties): **104-39-21**

Okay, all you whiny punks, quit your bellyachin' already. We found a battle that Wolverine can win.

Actually, this was a joust very high on the request-o-meter, with the characters' main offensive weapons (Ooooh! Pointy things!) being very similar. But this is a battle won on defense. Wolverine is a seasoned veteran and is smart enough to use the battle setting and terrain to his advantage. Y'know, come to think of it, Ripclaw is pretty good at that kind of thing himself. More important than anything else, however, is the resilience of Wolverine. Wolvie is just plain ol' tough to beat. He's the original Timex man—he takes a licking and keeps on ticking, thanks to that nifty healing factor of his. It's hard to beat a guy like that.

Ripclaw is still one tough customer. He's gone through that whole "Man Called Horse" Ritual of the Sun ordeal and everything. I wouldn't want to meet up with Ripclaw in a dark alley. Heck, I wouldn't want to meet up with him in a *well-lit* alley. But for practically any wound Ripclaw can hand out, Wolvie's already had worse at some point, and he can heal it. It's hard to beat a guy like that. Wolvie wins.

GENERATION X

MEMBERS: **Chamber, Husk, Jubilee, M, Mondo, Skin, Synch**
BASE OF OPERATIONS: **Xavier's School for Gifted Youngsters**
PIMPLE MEDICATION OF CHOICE: **Stridex**
RECORD: 11-3-1

VS. GEN13

MEMBERS: **Burnout, Fairchild, Freefall, Grunge, Rainmaker**
BASE OF OPERATIONS: **Looks like they're always hangin' out by a pool.**
PIMPLE MEDICATION OF CHOICE: **Oxy 10**
RECORD: **7-1-1**

Hey! Remember how *Gen13* was originally supposed to be called *Gen-X*? But Marvel already had a *Generation X* title in the works, so the Image folks had to change it. Well, here's WildStorm's revenge.

Both teams are very young and known for...well, to put it gently...screwing things up. But to this point, Gen13 has shown the ability to pull their fat out of the fire through ability, teamwork and an almost "uncanny" streak of luck. Plus, on a raw power basis, Gen13 has it all over Gen X. Think about it: Who would you rather have on your side in a fight—Burnout (who can fly and spew fireballs) or Husk (who can shed her skin)? Rainmaker (who can make lightning bolts) or Jubilee (who can make pretty light thingies)? I thought so.

But the one thing to keep in mind here is that both teams are very young. They've both got a long way to go and there's a lot of potential for change. In the long run, Generation X just might turn out to be the tougher squad. They are, after all, being taught by some of the best in the business: Banshee, Emma Frost and the X-Men. Replay this battle in one year, and you just might see Generation X mopping the floor with Gen13.

ELEKTRA

HOMETOWN: **Athens, Greece**
HEIGHT: **5'10"** WEIGHT: **135 lbs.**
SQUARE INCHES OF MATERIAL IN COSTUME: **58, or about as much as two paper towels**
Record: **592-196-33**

VS. SHI

HOMETOWN: **Kyoto, Japan**
HEIGHT: **5'11"** WEIGHT: **145 lbs.**
SQUARE INCHES OF MATERIAL IN COSTUME: **73, or about as much as a small road map**
RECORD: **10-1-2**

Ooooh! Catfight! Hisssss, hisssss! No fair pulling hair, girls!

Not that we'd have trouble with any of that. Of course, both of these lethal ladies prefer a sharpened blade to a yank on the tresses. Heck, either of these femme fatales could kick the asses of 99 44/100% of you guys reading this right now.

This fight is another very evenly matched toughie. Shi was trained as one of the Sohei, warrior monks with a tradition dating back to 8th Century feudal Japan. Elektra was trained by both the assassin band known as The Hand, and by Stick, the mysterious monklike mentor of Daredevil. Both combatants are as tough and deadly as they come. The only decisive edge in this battle—training—falls in Elektra's favor. Elektra's training, from both The Hand and Stick, went beyond the martial and into the mystical. That gives her the edge. In a furious match as close as the previous Bats/DD fight, Elektra wins, but just barely.

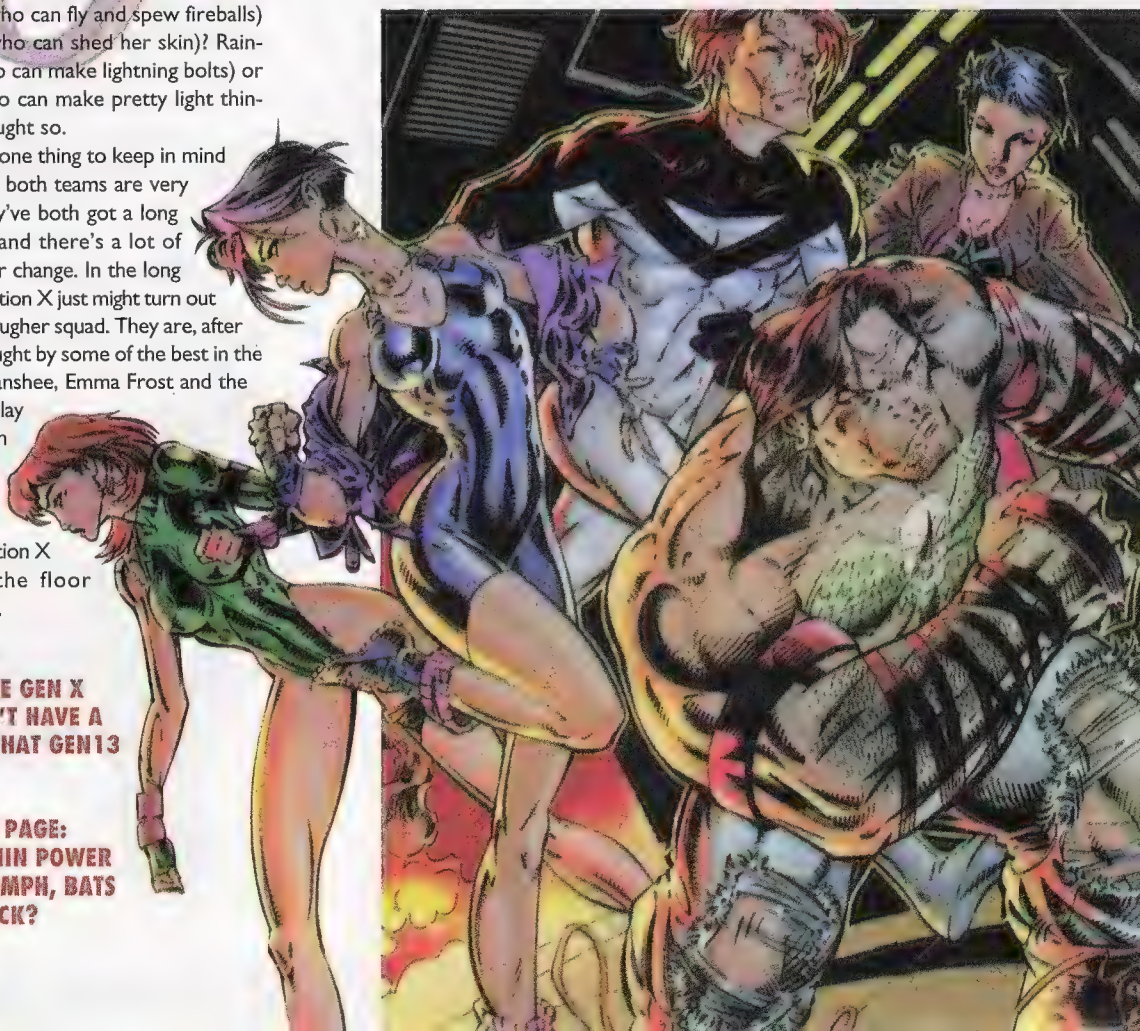
We don't want to take anything away from Shi, but Elektra's one tough customer. Heck, she's even come back from the dead. That still counts for something in the comics, doesn't it? Well, doesn't it?

ANIMATED TICK

HOMETOWN: **The City**
HEIGHT: **varies by size of your TV**
WEIGHT: **exists as electromagnetic radiation, thus weight is inapplicable**
HUMAN CHIN EQUIVALENT: **Jay Leno**
RECORD: 33-1-2

VS. ANIMATED BATMAN

HOMETOWN: **Animated Gotham City**
HEIGHT: **varies by size of your TV**
WEIGHT: **exists as electromagnetic radiation, thus weight is inapplicable**
HUMAN CHIN EQUIVALENT: **Kirk Douglas**
RECORD: **127-9-5**



RIGHT: THE GEN X KIDS DON'T HAVE A SHOT AT THAT GEN13 PACK

OPPOSITE PAGE: WHOSE CHIN POWER WILL TRIUMPH, BATS OR THE TICK?

This one is almost another non-battle, much like the Impossible Man and Mr. Mxyzptlk. The only way these guys would square off and fight is if one presented a threat to the other's city. If not, they'd probably just sit around, drink Cherry Coke and discuss animators and chins.

Fortunately, the Tick is stupid. Wonderfully stupid, but stupid nonetheless. Throw a guy in a big bat-suit into his line of sight and there would almost assuredly be some sort of misunderstanding that would lead to a fight. The Tick would be one tough opponent for Batman, strong as anything and nearly indestructible. But brains will win this battle. Batman can outwit him with one frontal lobe tied behind his back. Believe me—Bats eats dummies like him for mental breakfast!

Luckily for the Tick, Batman is also a nice guy. He'd probably defeat the Tick in such a way as to make the Tick think he's won when he's actually lost, just to get him off his case. Tick, ya big lug—I love ya, but you're in well over your animated head against the Caped Crusader. Spoon!

DEATHSTROKE

HOMETOWN: **Washington, D.C.**
HEIGHT: **6'1"** WEIGHT: **215 lbs.**
PRICE PER HIT: **$5,000, less with available Frequent Assassination discount (some restrictions apply)**
RECORD: **633-432-82**

VS. TASKMASTER

HOMETOWN: **Parts Unknown**
HEIGHT: **6'2"** WEIGHT: **230 lbs.**
PRICE PER HIT: **$5,000, or $2 off with coupon from last Sunday's paper**
RECORD: **291-203-33**

Take a picture of this: Slade Wilson, a.k.a. Deathstroke the Terminator, gets a contract to wax the Taskmaster, a fellow hitman and headmaster of the Supervillain Flunky Training Academy.

The Taskmaster, in turn, gets a job to take out Deathstroke. Two tough-as-all-get-out hitmen-for-hire going up against each other will surely make for a great battle. (Hey, it's money well spent. I just hope our accounting department reimburses me. I saved the receipts.)

Actually, it only looks like a good battle. Deathstroke's one and only chance is to snipe the Taskmaster from about a mile away. Otherwise, he's toast. The Taskmaster, with his "photographic reflexes," wins easily in any sort of a hand-to-hand battle. The Taskmaster's reflexes allow him to duplicate any action he sees, and he's already seen a lot (Daredevil, Captain America, etc.). I can see ol' TM ricocheting a Daredevil-esque billy-club off a wall 19 times and having it smack Deathstroke right in the nose just to make 'Stroke cry like a girl. And if this battle lasts more than six seconds, then Taskmaster can duplicate anything Deathstroke does, and probably even do it better. That's a trick that ol' Mr. One-Eye can't pull off. Nice knowing ya, baby. This one is easily the most lopsided of our battles.

RIDDLER

HOMETOWN: **Gotham City**
HEIGHT: **5'8"** WEIGHT: **140 lbs.**
FAVORITE JOKE: **"So anyways, two guys walk into this bar..."**
RECORD: **105-332-44**

VS. ARCADE

HOMETOWN: **Lincolnshire, England**
HEIGHT: **5'5"** WEIGHT: **130 lbs. (400 with those platform shoes)**
FAVORITE JOKE: **"There once was a man from Nantucket..."**
RECORD: **97-213-12**

The battle of the pantywaists is upon us! Neither of these guys are physical combatants. We're definitely not looking at a slam-bang punch-in-the-chops fest here. In fact, if these two wimps did have a knuckle-duster, they'd put on pretty damn boring show. So instead, we'll put each guy in one of the other's patented deathtraps. Yeah, that'll be fun! Well, maybe fun to look at, at least. We still don't have much of a competition.

The Riddler wins easily. He's shown a think-on-the-fly ability that Arcade never has. Things always have to perfectly go Arcade's way, or he's finished even before he starts. The Riddler, on the other hand, has a certain amount of adaptability in him. Mr. E. Nigma has also shown a bit of physical skill that Arcade does not have. If taken out of his element and put in someone else's hands, the Riddler can hang tough, both mentally and physically. Arcade can't. Thrown into the other guy's trap, the Riddler just might be clever enough and sneaky enough to escape. Arcade is a red smear in about 12 seconds.

BATMAN

HOMETOWN: **Gotham City**
HEIGHT: **6'1"** WEIGHT: **210 lbs.**
HORN HEIGHT: **2 inches; 11 inches if drawn by Kelley Jones**
RECORD: **1,644-231-97**

VS. DAREDEVIL

HOMETOWN: **Hell's Kitchen**
HEIGHT: **6'1"** WEIGHT: **210 lbs.**
HORN HEIGHT: **1 inch; none of your darn business when Elektra's around**
RECORD: **823-244-88**

People used to talk about this one all the time back in the early '80s when Daredevil was (oh, how I hate this term) "hot," thanks to Frank Miller writing and drawing his book. Fans noticed a lot of similarity between Batman and DD (hanging out on rooftops at night, strong sense of justice, parent or parents murdered by bad guys) and clamored to see who the toughest nighttime protector was.

"Tough" being the operative word here. Both combatants are tough as hell, and very evenly matched. Both are brainy. Batman is portrayed as the consummate detective, and Daredevil's alter ego Matt Murdock is a top-flight lawyer. Batman probably has more combat smarts, and a lot more tricks in that utility belt of his, but Daredevil makes up for that with his heightened senses and radar. Batman definitely gets the technology advantage, but Daredevil is a fighter—as Matt Murdock, he's been fighting all his life. This equally matched brawl can only end one way: Unless the Kingpin or Bane shows up to throw a monkey wrench into the works, it's going to be a draw.

Come to think of it, Frank Miller's got a little experience on Batman too.

DD MIGHT LOOK LIKE HE'S GETTIN' TROUNCED BY BATMAN, BUT DON'T COUNT HIM OUT TOO QUICKLY...

BLACK & WHITE
EXPLODE ONTO THE PAGES OF THEIR ONGOING SERIES!!
THEY'RE BACK AND MORE THAN EVER THEY MUST PROVE THAT JUSTICE CAN ONLY BE
CODE NAME:
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Join the Black & White team when the ongoing series begins February 1996!!
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Wouldn't it be fun to see him do this one?

MR. MXYZPTLK

HOMETOWN: **The Fifth Dimension**
HEIGHT: **3'9"** Weight: **75 lbs.**
FAVORITE PARTY GAME: **Pin-the-Tail-on-Superman**
RECORD: **0-21-0**

VS. IMPOSSIBLE MAN

HOMETOWN: **Poppup**
HEIGHT: **Variable**
WEIGHT: **A soul as light as a feather**
FAVORITE PARTY GAME: **Nude Crisco Twister**
RECORD: **He really doesn't care**

Hmmm. This is an interesting one. If these guys met, they wouldn't want to fight. All they usually want to do is have some fun. A team-up between the two is a more likely scenario. They'd get together to make some mischief and probably inadvertently wreak heaps of havoc along the way. Maybe they'd gang up on Superman, but only if Mxyzptlk could convince the Impossible Man that it would be a good time. That might be an easy job, seeing as how it's been implied in the Super-titles that Mr. M and Impy are actually one and the same.

Now, in the unlikely instance that they were to get in a fight (And what would *that* say about the duality of man?), the Impossible Man wins. Neither character is malevolent, but Impy has a much greater potential for violence, albeit accidental violence. He'd probably use his shape-shifting ability to turn his body into a giant road grater and accidentally mulch Mxyzptlk up. But he'd feel pretty bad about it.

Another thing is for sure—Impy would do whatever he could to avoid pulling off the Mxyzptlk-ordained event that will banish Mxyzptlk back to his home dimension. Hey, he wants to keep the game going as long as he can. All the more fun.

MOLECULE MAN

HOMETOWN: **Pittsburgh, Pa.**
HEIGHT: **5'4"** WEIGHT: **135 lbs.**
NEUROSIS: **Lack of self-confidence**
RECORD: **17-36-2**

VS. SOLAR

HOMETOWN: Muskogee, Okla.
HEIGHT: **6'1"** WEIGHT: **180 lbs.**
NEUROSIS: **Occasional God complex**
RECORD: **486-1-13**

WHO WINS: MXY OR IMPY? WHO CARES? THEY SURE DON'T. THESE CHUMPS PROBABLY WOULDN'T FIGHT ANYWAY.

Yow! This could be the most cataclysmic battle the universe has ever seen! The Molecule Man can control matter at the molecular level and Solar can control any form of energy. Between the two of them, they can manipulate darned near anything they want, and they don't have to lift a finger to do it. No matter what happens in this tussle, there are bound to be a few things taken apart. Best find some big open space somewhere to hold this bout.

Despite the fact that Molecule Man might be most powerful being in any comic universe (Think about it—he can do whatever he wants to *any* object, including living objects. Like you.), Solar gets the nod. Why? Confidence.

The Molecule Man's big failing in the past has been the fact that he lacks confidence. I can easily see him having a serious moment of self-doubt in battle against such a powerful foe. Right now, Molecule Man's probably got his head together better than he has at any point in the past, but Solar's confidence (he once created a new Earth because he was kinda depressed with the old one) wins out in what ultimately becomes a battle of wills.

Come to think of it, maybe the shrinks that deal with these guys' enormous egos are the real winners.

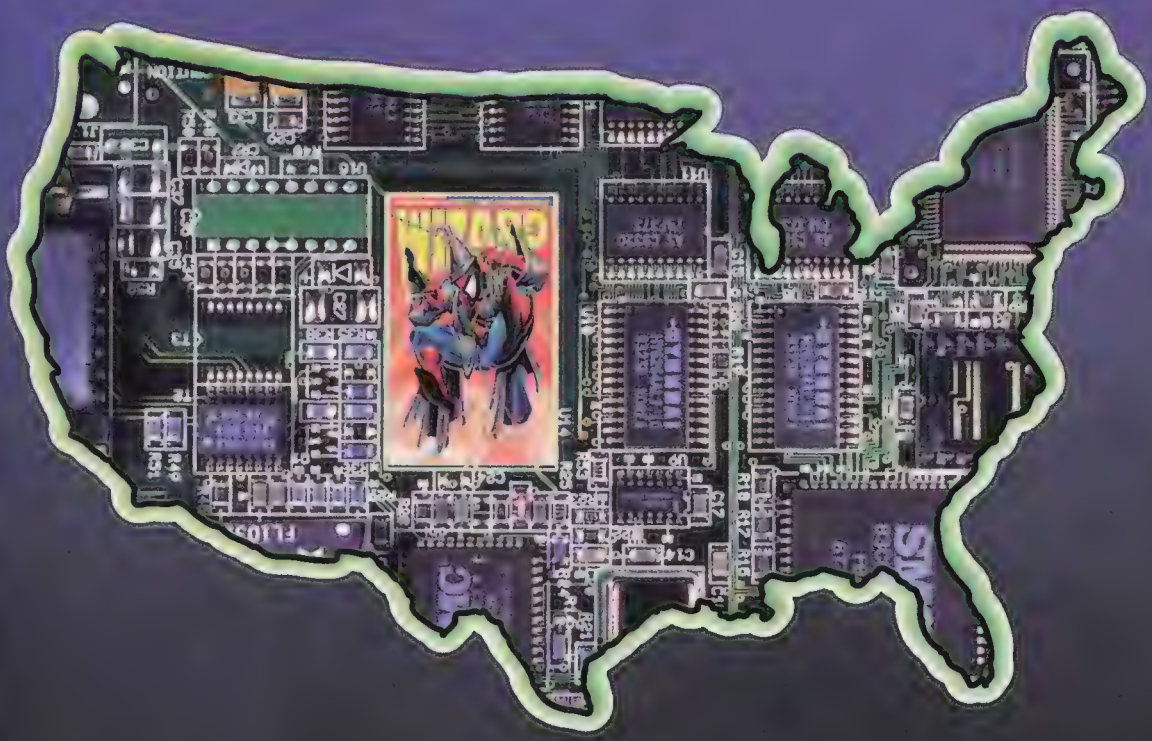
Y'know, several battles that we set up in the first "When Titans Tussle" actually have come to pass in the last 15 months. The Hulk is facing off against Pitt. Green Lantern has met the Silver Surfer. And of course, Marvel and DC are crossing over their entire lines. So maybe we'll actually see a few of these particular battles played out. Maybe there's a new spirit of cooperation happening between comic companies and we'll actually get even more of these crossover battles in the near future. Just maybe...

...but just in case we don't, feel free to join us here again sometime soon for "Round Three." I'll be the one with the spit bucket. **W**

Armed with only a cheese grater, a box of 200 round toothpicks and a pair of coal

GOD COMPLEXES? NOT QUITE, AS ONLY ONE GUY WILL FLOAT AWAY FROM THIS BRAWL

Wire Into Wizard



with America Online®

WIZARD WORLD is *WIZARD*'s new America Online area. Designed with comic book readers in mind, this area has tons of great stuff, including contests, price guides, forums, and chat areas. There's even a place to talk about *MAGIC: THE GATHERING*™ in the *INQUEST* folder. Want to check it out? Sign on to America Online and use the keyword "*WIZARD*," or call **800-754-4400** to get America Online software for your computer.

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The "Amaze the Agents" X-FILES Contest

Every month in Topps Comics' *The X-Files*, stamina-filled government agents Mulder and Scully bravely investigate all sorts of weird, funky happenings. Think *you* can come up with something worthy of their notice?

Well, *we* think so. Come up with the best hoax you can and see if the government notices. Send in a photo that you mocked up of a supernatural event (y'know, like a UFO sighting or maybe a Bigfoot footprint or something) worthy of the agents' investigation. Do a good enough job and two people in trench coats just might show up at your door and start probing. Or maybe you'll just win some unbelievably **COOL PRIZES...**

CONTEST

The Cool Prizes

Grand Prize (1): One reader will receive an extra-spiffy "X-Files" leather jacket, a Topps Comics *The X-Files* trade paperback, a copy of *The X-Files* #1 autographed by Miran Kim, Stefan Petrucha and Charles Adlard, a box of the Topps *The X-Files* series 1 trading cards and...an actual "X-Files" TV script **AUTOGRAPHED BY A SUPER-MYSTERY "X-FILES" STAR!**

Second Prize (5): Five readers will receive an *X-Files* trade paperback, a copy of *X-Files* #1 autographed by Kim, Petrucha and Adlard and a box of the *X-Files* series 1 trading cards.

Third Prize (15): Fifteen readers will receive an *X-Files* trade paperback and a box of the *X-Files* series 1 trading cards.

This contest is sponsored by Topps Comics, a bunch of people who know the answers to all the mysteries.

Unidentified Legal Object

No purchase necessary. Contest is open to anyone except employees of Wizard Press, Topps Comics, Twentieth Century Fox Film Corporation and their immediate families or the Yeti. Print your name, date of birth, address, city, state, zip and telephone number with area code on the official entry form or a 3-by-5-inch index card and attach the form or card to your photo entry. Enter as many times as you like. Mail each entry separately to: *X-Files* Contest, c/o Wizard Press, P.O. Box 118, Congers, NY 10920-0118. No mechanical reproductions of completed forms are accepted, but you can photocopy the entry form before filling it out if you don't want to mess up your magazine. All entries become property of Wizard Press and none will be returned. All taxes (federal, state and local, if any) will be the responsibility of the prize winners. No cash equivalent or substitute prizes will be offered. Prizes are awarded in the names of the contest winners and are not transferable. Offer void where prohibited, regulated or restricted by law in a manner inconsistent with the purposes and rules hereof. Come to think of it, the Cancer Man isn't eligible, either. He's one nasty sumbitch. **All entries must be received at contest headquarters by February 28, 1996.** Wizard Press is not responsible for lost, late, misdirected or mutilated entries. Odds of winning will be determined by the number of valid entries received prior to the closing date of the contest. Prize winners will be selected based on quality and creativity among all properly completed entries by Wizard Press. Judging will take place on March 15, 1996.

For a list of winners, available after March 15, 1996, send a self-addressed stamped envelope to: *X-Files* Winners, c/o Wizard Press, P.O. Box 118, Congers, NY 10920-0118.

Fill this out, attach it to your photo entry (No Polaroids, and focus like you mean it!), put it an envelope and send it to: X-Files Contest, c/o Wizard Press, P.O. Box 118, Congers, NY 10920-0118. The deadline is February 28, 1996, so hurry up!

The "Amaze the Agents" X-Files Contest

DEADLINE IS FEBRUARY 28, 1996!

Name _____ Date of Birth _____

Address _____

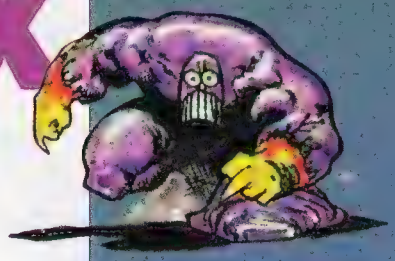
City _____ State _____ Zip _____

Phone Number (with area code) _____ Jacket Size _____

Did you enclose your photo, you fraud?

CHARACTER PROFILE: THE MAXX

BY MATTHEW BRADY



VITAL STATS

REAL NAME: (*The Maxx* #1-#20) Dave, a.k.a. Br'er Lapin; (#21-#30) Oliver

AGE: (*The Maxx* #1-#20) 32 years; (#21-#30) 27 years

HEIGHT: (*The Maxx* #1-20) 7'4"; (#21-#30) 9'1 1/4"

WEIGHT: (*The Maxx* #1-20) 511 lbs.; (#21-#30) 900 lbs.

EYE COLOR: (*The Maxx* #1-20) in the Outback, black, and in the real world, Hazel; (#21-#30) Outback, yellow, real world, brown

FIRST APPEARANCE: (the original Maxx) *Comico Primer* #5; (current incarnation) *Darker Image* #1; (the new Maxx) *The Maxx* #21

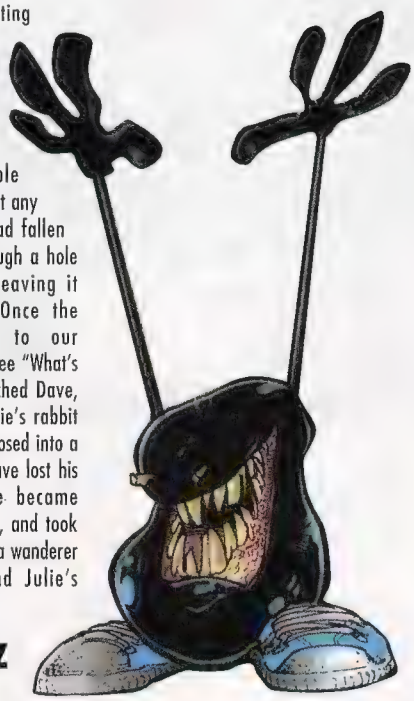
ENEMY: (*The Maxx* #1-#20) Mr. Gone; (#21-#30) a 300-lb. banana slug (Really!)

ORIGIN

There was a little girl named Julie Winters who created a world in her mind, called the Outback. It revealed that while everyone has their own unique mental "Outback," Julie's personal Outback was protected by her spirit animal, a rabbit.

When Julie was in college, she was attacked and raped, transforming her once peaceful Outback into a wild and chaotic land. While driving a few months after the attack, Julie hit a bum in the street, after mistaking him for her attacker.

Inadvertently projecting her spirit animal onto this bum, who was named Dave and lived through the accident, she guiltily covered the him with trash, including a purple lampshade. This wasn't just any lampshade, though; it had fallen into Julie's Outback through a hole between dimensions, leaving it touched with magic. Once the lampshade—returned to our dimension by Mr. Gone (see "What's Been Happening")—touched Dave, it sealed the bond of Julie's rabbit with him, and metamorphosed into a stylin' purple costume. Dave lost his own identity when he became enmeshed in the Outback, and took the identity of the Maxx, a wanderer through our world and Julie's Outback.



THE ISZ

WHAT'S BEEN HAPPENING

After the emergence of the Maxx, both he and Julie began a journey to find the truth about the Outback, and just who the Maxx is, anyway.

Enter Mr. Gone. A tall, sleazy weenie with a pot belly, he boasts the power to enter people's Outbacks at will, and he has a mysterious connection to Julie's past. Mr. Gone reveals that the Maxx is a key to Julie's puzzle, and to fully get her life in order, she needs to leave the Maxx behind. So Julie leaves for San Francisco in an attempt to find out the truth about herself, while Mr. Gone continues to torment the Maxx with the aid of some deceptively cute natives of the Outback, the Isz.

Along the way, the Maxx meets Sarah, the dumpy daughter of the evil Mr. Gone. Sarah links minds with the Maxx to help him find out who he was. And is.

The Maxx learns about a mysterious 'Buick' that is somehow tied into his origin, and Julie returns from California pregnant (Whoops!).

Slowly, all the pieces begin to fall together as Mr. Gone aids Julie in realizing that she created the big purple Maxx that is stuck between this world and her Outback. At the same time, the Maxx is realizing the truth about himself: He was just a poor schlep named Dave who accidentally got caught in Julie's Outback.

Julie comes to realize that her spirit animal, which she projected on Dave, rightfully belongs inside her, not projected on anyone else. Her spirit animal returned, Dave wanders out of Julie's life.

Meanwhile, a banana slug, and Sarah's spirit animal (her own Maxx, this time in the form of a horse), have escaped from her Outback.

The story picks up 10 years later, where Sarah is an unemployed writer, and has repressed her memories of Outbacks and adventures with the purple Maxx. Her personal Maxx, weakened by being away from her Outback, and posing as a tattered bum on her doorstep, has been trying to get her attention for ten years. Lacking the energy to meld with someone, Sarah's animal just sits there as this bum. The slug, who was stepped on by someone when it appeared in this world, and its guts intermingled with a positive affirmation cassette, is now a 300-lb. mountain of muscle that spouts out positive affirmations as it kills people, and is now threatening the end of the world.

UPCOMING HIGHLIGHTS

The big upcoming Maxx project (aside from the new season of animated episodes on MTV's "Oddities" show) is December's *Gen[13]/The Maxx* Special.

"It's [set in] some whole other kid's outback," Maxx creator Sam Kieth says. "Mr. Gone kidnaps some kids—including a possibly Gen-active one—and takes them to an Outback." This sets the stage for both the Gen[13] kids and the Maxx to get involved.

Will this new Outback be as dreamy and surreal as Julie's? Considering that one of the prominent landmarks is a giant floating monkey, the answer is probably yes.

RECOMMENDED HIGHLIGHTS

So if all this leaves you chomping at the bit for Maxx adventure, be sure to rummage through back issue boxes for some of the highlights of the series, as recommended by Kieth himself:

- ***The Maxx* #4**—The introduction of Sarah. "She's not a typical comic book female," Kieth admits. "She's got glasses, curly hair, and is kind of dumpy. Still, a lot of readers have told me they can really identify with her, and just love her. Go figure."
- ***The Maxx* #10-#18**—The 'Fairy Tale' issues. "I really like the childlike nature of these issues, both art and story-wise," Kieth reflects. "It sounds weird, but it's really hard, especially after so much training, to draw like a child again."
- ***The Maxx* #19-#20**—The big revelation. The last puzzle pieces are put in place here, as we realize who, and what, The Maxx is, what's wrong with Julie's outback, who Mr. Gone is, and how the damn Buick ties into it all.

SIMILAR TASTES

If The Maxx sounds like your cup of tea, Kieth also recommends picking up Vertigo's *Sandman*. "Really, it's the only other thing out there that I could compare with The Maxx in terms of dream worlds and the levels of the mind," Kieth says. W

Matthew Brady, who wrote the Cyberfrog article in issue #53, is pretty sure his spirit animal is a sloth. In fact, he's so sure of it, he's taking a three-month nap to prove it.

Greg Capullo's

KRASH COURSE

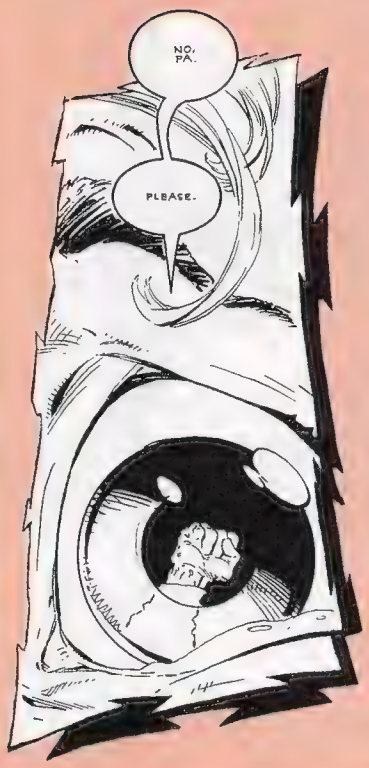
POWERFUL PAGES FAST PART 2

Hello, everybody. Are ve ready vor the second half of our vorkout? Today ve'll pound our pages vith some more ideas and force them to grow! No girly-men here!

1. the shadows know

For our first set, we'll use shadows to help us. This is a creative way of passing along information to the reader without showing him all the goods. Shadows can be used to show impending danger, superiority above others (i.e. the shadows dwarf the onlookers), or simply to keep someone's identity a mystery.

KRASH COURSE and related text ™ & © Greg Capullo.



2. mirror, mirror

Reflections can create a lot of interest, whether they're in a pool of water, an actual mirror or what have you. They can show someone "reflecting" on their own thoughts or, as in this example, can show the reader what a character is seeing. Explore for yourself other cool ways of conveying info with reflections. It's sometimes tricky but always fun!

3. come together

Heads in profile with no background is another common exercise. This type of juxtapositioning can effectively convey either a coming together of individuals or a collision between them. That will depend on the emotions conveyed on their mugs.

4. down and out

Last month we talked about the downshot. Now it's time for the upshot. This type of shot adds drama, babe! When you use an upshot you place the reader's eyes low so that he has to look upward at what you're showing him. This has psychological implications. Things that are bigger than you can cause you to feel afraid, weaker, in awe of, dominated over. .you get the picture.

5. on the level

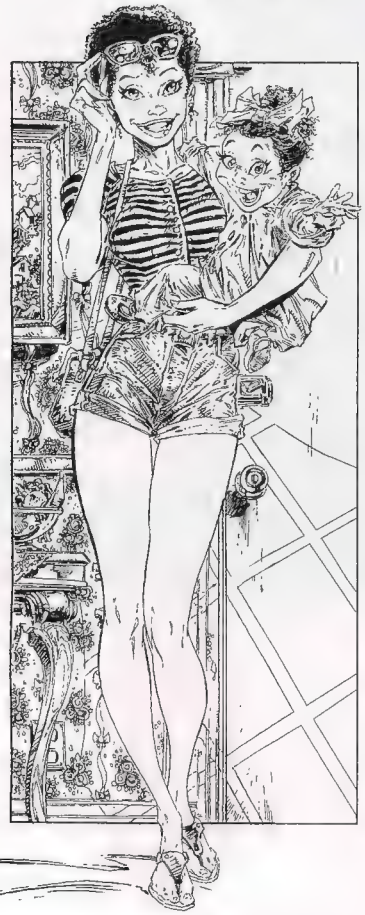
As long as we've got our sights set low, I'll talk about the ground level shot. As I said before, placing the reader's eye level where it's not accustomed will create interest. So unless he's really, really, really, really short, this shot will work. You can either show some ground or crop everybody's feet a bit as though you're actually below ground level. Though I've seen people do it, I've heard strong reasoning why you shouldn't use the bottom of the panel as the ground plane. If you have people actually standing on the panel border it sort of disrupts the illusion that the panel is actually a window into another reality (i.e. the story). Decide for yourself.

6. what's a soliloquy?

Next we have what I call the "soliloquy shot." It's where you blacken the background and throw a spotlight on your speaking character as he or she gives some pithy speech. It should be used when what is being said has importance and you want all the focus to be there.

7. border check

The opposite of this would be the open panel. No borders. Just an imaginary ground plane and your people and/or objects. Cast shadows can be used to reinforce the ground plane and add interest. Again, cutting out the background focuses your attention on a particular character or object, giving it importance.



8. 3-D made easy

Lastly, we have breaking panels. A couple of ways to do this is having the closest and most important character jut out of the panel while still being contained, or to actually be standing outside of the panel as if walking off the page. It gives sort of a 3-D effect which is cool if you don't overplay it.

There! That vas the last set. You made it through your vorkout. Now don't lose your pump! Keep vorking out with the exercises I've shown you. That vay even the quietest pages of your story vill have power. Till next month. .keep the lead burnin', tough guys! **W**

Greg Capullo can be seen every month penciling Spawn, *published by Image Comics.*

DRAWING BOARD

Who needs the pros? This is the show for **Wizard Readers' Art**. The eight fine folks whose artwork got an honorable mention this month will each receive a *Silver Surfer* #100 signed by Ron Marz and a copy of *The Outcast Special* signed by Norm Breyfogle. Each of the three rowdy Runners-Up will score a copy of *Flash* #0 signed by Mark Waid, an *Uncanny X-Men* #317 signed by Joe Madureira and a *Dr. Strange* (new series) #75 signed by Peter Gross. Matthew Clouston, the amazing artist of the winning entry this month, will receive all that cool stuff, plus an original piece of Wrath art from the new SkyBox Ultraverse card set by Dave Dorman (tons o' thanks, Dave)! A huge congrats to all of you!

THE ARTIST

MATTHEW CLOUSTON

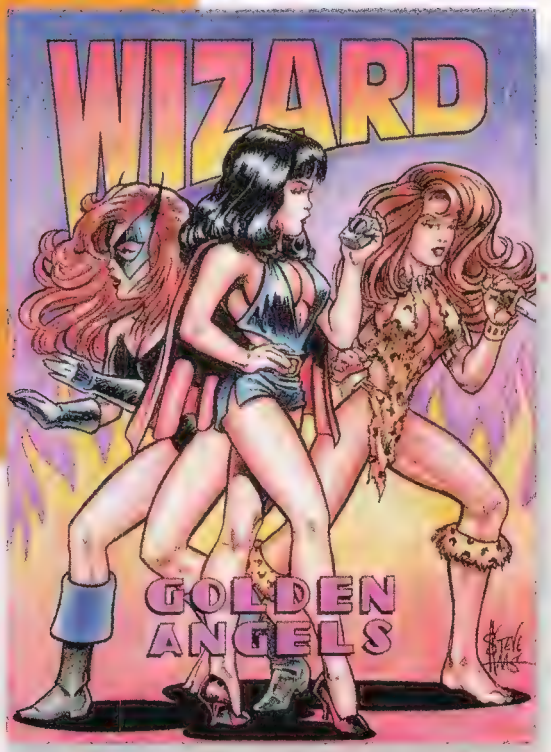
THE BOOTY

GRAND PRIZE

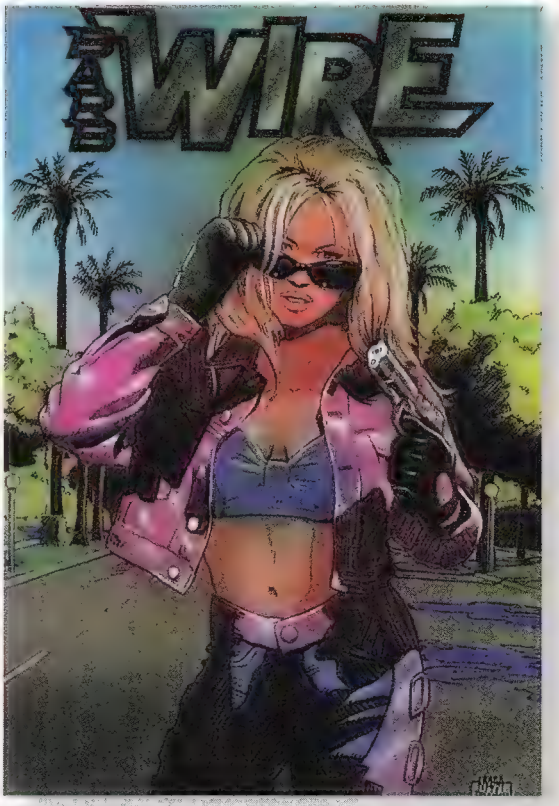
SPIDER-MAN **Matthew Clouston** Syracuse, NY

RUNNERS-UP

GOLDEN ANGELS Steve Haas Anaheim, CA



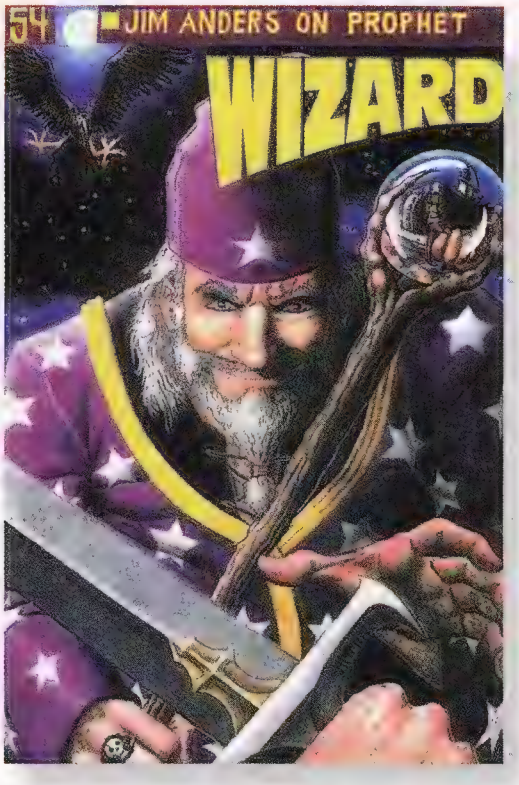
MADMAN Romel Sanchez Watchung, NJ



BARB WIRE Matt Busch Pasadena, CA

HONORABLE MENTIONS

VOGUE
Everett Kruger
Norwalk, IA



WIZARD VS. PROPHET
Jim Anderson
Wichita, KS

SUPER-COLOSSUS
Barnabás A'brai
Izabella, Hungary

DC'S SUPERTEENS
Jesse Baggs
Sacramento, CA

DRAWING BOARD

SUPERMAN VS. SUPREME
David E. Reddick
Anderson, IN

BOBA FETT
Derek Oswandel
Harrisburg, PA

THE NEW VULTURE
Joachim Gmoser
Fort Erie, Ontario, Canada

THE TICK VS. MEGATON MAN
Joel R. Steudler
Pittsburgh, PA

Want your art to appear on one of these four pages in future issues? Think you've got what it takes? (Hey—quality *and* originality count, y'know.) Then send your Drawing Board entries to:

Drawing Board
c/o Wizard Press
151 Wells Avenue
Congers, NY 10920-2064

And follow these rules or else: Use any form of unlined paper or posterboard (no larger than 8 inches by 11 1/4 inches) and any medium (oils, crayon, mustard, etc.—but not neon inks). Put your name, full address and TELEPHONE NUMBER on the back of your piece, and mail it flat to avoid damage. All entries are nonreturnable and become the property of Wizard Press. Employees of Wizard Press are the sole judges of the contests, and all decisions are final. Got it? Good luck!

HOMEMADE HEROES

THE ARENA FOR FAN-MADE ACTION FIGURES.

Yowza! Now that's talent! Believe it or not, the following figures were made from plain old, ordinary figures, and every one of these gifted creators will receive a Mattel toy three-pack and a copy of *Cyberforce #3* signed by Marc Silvestri. The two Runners-Up will get all that cool stuff, *plus* a copy of *Codename: Stryke Force #1* signed by Brandon Peterson. The Grand Prize Winner runs off with all that loot plus an awesome Mattel Ballistic Polystone statue. Congrats to everyone!

Muchas gracias to the super cool people over at Mattel for their generous donation of prizes. You guys rock our world!

GRAND PRIZE

THE WINNER

GRANT KASHIWABARA

FAIRCHILD

Made from a Toy Biz Invisible Woman figure, Grant Kashiwabara of Honolulu, Hawaii, did a great job on this figure. And the neato packaging is an added bonus! (Nice accessory weapon there, Grant!)

SECOND PLACE

X-WOMEN

Kevin Lum of Honolulu, Hawaii, (Hey, you don't think…?) made this awesome Psylocke from a Toy Biz Invisible Woman, modeling putty and acrylic paint. Jean Grey was crafted from a Toy Biz Phoenix figure with vinyl, putty and acrylics.

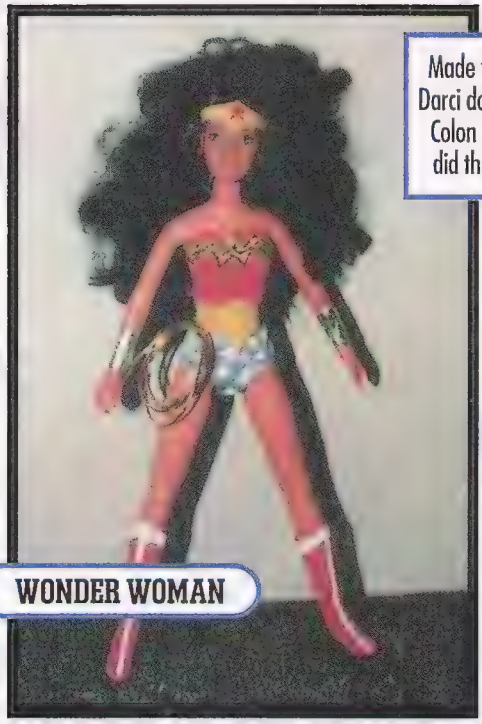
SECOND PLACE

DR. MANHATTAN

The omnipotent being from *Watchmen* was originally a Toy Biz Iceman 1 body with the lower legs from a Weapon X figure. Paul Herwick of Climax, N.Y., did the honors.

CHAMBER

This member of Generation X was made from a Playmates "Riker as a Malkorian" figure with some silly string. Chad Wm. Porter of Weston, Ontario, Canada, gets extra points for his innovational use of materials.



WONDER WOMAN

Made from one of those Darci dolls from 1978, Joe Colon from Bronx, N.Y., did the Amazon proud.

MARSHALL LAW

We have no clue what Tom Lotz of Naples, Fla., used to make this guy but he sure looks good to us.

WARRIOR

Ryan Dahlke of Hesperia, Calif., made Mr. Gardner here outta a bunch of stuff. The head and torso are made from a Toy Biz Venom figure, arms from a Toy Biz Random and some mysterious figure (We don't have a clue!), and legs from a Toy Biz Omega Red.

PLANTMAN

Easily one of the worst villains spawned by the "House of Ideas," Joe Brown of Stoughton, Mass., sure made 'im look exactly like he does in the comics. Joe made him from a Toy Biz Silver Surfer 1.

HEY!

If you're interested in entering the homemade figure contest, send well lit, clear, color photographs (No Polaroids!) to:

HOMEMADE HEROES
c/o Wizard Press
PO Box 118
Congers, NY 10920-0118

scene

A guide to Japanese comics and animation.

by Lea Hernandez

ghosting its way into theaters

What movie released in late 1995 has computer graphics and a story in a not-quite-this world setting that speaks to our need to be human? Well, yeah, there's "Toy Story" from Disney/Pixar, but there's also the Manga Entertainment Western/Japanese co-production "Ghost in the Shell."

"Ghost in the Shell," unlike "Toy Story," is not completely computer-generated, but is a stunning combination of 70 percent traditional cel animation techniques and 30 percent state-of-the-art computer graphics. Based on the popular cyberpunk manga by Masamune Shirow, it's also the first production of its kind; a collaboration between a distribution company and a Japanese studio.

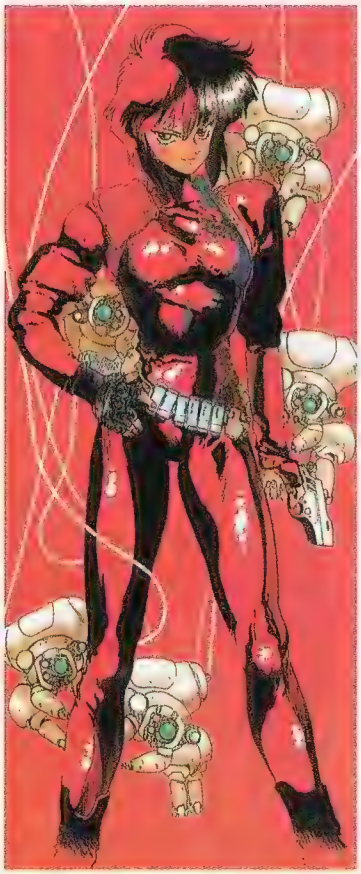
"Ghost in the Shell," which was previewed at the 11th Tokyo International Fantastic Film Festival in September, is slated for a January theatrical release in the U.S.

Fans may be seeing the animated "Ghost in the Shell" movie in early '96!

"Ghost" centers around Major Motoko Kusanagi, who is on the trail of a virtual agent, the Puppet Master. The Puppet Master, created as Project 2501 by the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, is a perfect solution to the requirements of international espionage...until it decides it is a life form in its own right. The Puppet Master threatens to expose itself as an illegal creation to the Internal Bureau of Investigations, setting in motion a race between the Ministry and the Bureau. The Bureau is unaware that the Puppet Master has the ability to show its semi-cybernetic agents glimpses of true freedom, and that the Puppet Master has proposed a merger to Major Kasanagi in order to fulfill its objective to live outside the net.

Although the decision of whether or not Manga will be involved in future productions of this sort rests on the success of "Ghost," this production was by no means a trial balloon. Manga Entertainment, in both the UK and the U.S., has been aggressive in expanding the market for anime by distributing to music stores in addition to video stores and comic specialty shops, as well as screening Manga films on college campuses all over the U.S. as part of free anime festivals. "Ghost in the Shell" has been entered in the Sundance Film Festival (although there was no word on its acceptance at press time), and has been screened by a number of the United States' better known distributors and directors. Should a distributor choose to take on "Ghost," the release date in the U.S. may be up in the air for a while. If no distributor grabs "Ghost," Manga will release it to theaters early in 1996.

"Ghost in the Shell" would probably be purely theoretical if Laurence Guinness (Director of Acquisition and Pro-



duction for Manga Entertainment Worldwide) had not seen a film that the animation in "Ghost" has already been compared to—the animated "Akira." Laurence saw untapped potential in anime, and began the process of building the anime market in the UK the way U.S. Manga Entertainment President Marvin Gleicher would eventually build the market in the U.S.

To create a buzz among fans, Marvin Gleicher elected to send a special three-minute preview tape to the members of the Manga Entertainment fan club, and arranged for a special screening of the English dub of "Ghost" at last November's Anime East convention in Newark, N.J. Gleicher admits to some concern about screening a dubbed "Ghost" for anime fans—most have a reputation for disliking dubbed anime—but found the response positive.

No doubt, some of the credit for the quality of the dub can go to Animaze and Kevin Seymour, who coordinated the dub of last year's critical success (and former Pick of the Month), "Wings of Honneamise." Animaze was also involved in the production of fan-favorite anime videos like "Giant Robo" (another former Pick of the Month) and Pioneer's "Tenchi Muyo" and "El Hazard." Animaze unitized the expertise of

NEXT PAGE →

MANGA NEWS

TANGLED IN A WEB

More Web crawling this month, and I'm not talking about the type normally associated with Spider-Man! The definitively cool anime/manga related Web site now and forever may very well be the Anime Turnpike. This site has links to dozens of other anime- and manga-related pages. Subjects include anime series, conventions, clubs, fan art, fan fiction and commercial pages.

The commercial page links are a dream come true for both newer and die-hard anime/manga aficionados: represented are 15 American publishers and video producers including Dark Horse Comics, Viz, U.S. Manga Corps, Software Sculptors and Manga Entertainment.

Ten Japanese companies such as AIC, Bandai, Kodansha, Shogakukan and Toshiba-EMI can also be accessed. If that isn't enough to happily waste hours of time, there's still more than 30 miscellaneous links to explore. Over 50 links from just one page! Get a comfy chair, chips and a soda, you'll be at this for hours!

The URL for Anime Turnpike is http://soyokaze.biosci.ohio-state.edu:80/~jei/anipike/./

GHOST BUSTING!

Slightly before the American release of the animated "Ghost in the Shell" movie, Dark Horse will be releasing the collected translation of the *Ghost in the Shell* manga. Acquiring, translating, retouching and producing *GitS* was a labor of love for Studio Proteus, consuming five years from beginning to end, and it certainly shows.

Masamune Shirow's unusual use of color pages leading into black-and-white pages was left intact and the sound effects on the color pages were retouched using a combination of traditional lettering (courtesy of *Spawn* letterer Tom Orzechowski) and computer paint programs. The collection also corrects a few pages.

Of course, outrage over Shirow's decision to delete a sex scene still rages among fans, but one missing page shouldn't deter anyone who missed the series or wants a deluxe collection of the original issues.

The *Ghost in the Shell* collection shipped Dec. 22 just in the nick of time for Christmas and the collection should be relatively easy to find, due to the momentum of the movie. The collected *Ghost in the Shell* runs 368 pages (black and white, and color), with a cover gallery, author's notes and a bio of Masamune Shirow—all for $24.95.

SAVE YOUR SCREEN WITH TENCHI

The people that put the martial arts sex-change comedy of "Ranma 1/2" on CD-ROM bring you a screen saver that features one of the most popular anime series ever released in the U.S.—Pioneer's English language dub of "Tenchi Muyo Ryo-Ohki."

"Tenchi" is the story of a high school student who releases an oni (demon) from her prison and the mayhem (both mystic and intergalactic), that ensues. Included in this new screen saver is music never before released in North America and six original music videos. The price for the Tenchi Muyo screen saver is $34.95, and it's available for both Macintosh and Windows.

Ghost in the Shell manga packager and translator Toren Smith. Seymour felt that Smith's knowledge of Shirow's story helped the Animaze team get a handle on *Ghost*'s intricate world.

And, hey, for more information, staff bios and character descriptions, check out the cool Ghost in the Shell page on Manga Entertainment's Web site located at http://www.manga.com/manga. W

Lea Hernandez letters and retouches manga, co-moderates the anime and manga forum for the online service GEnie, and writes and draws comics.

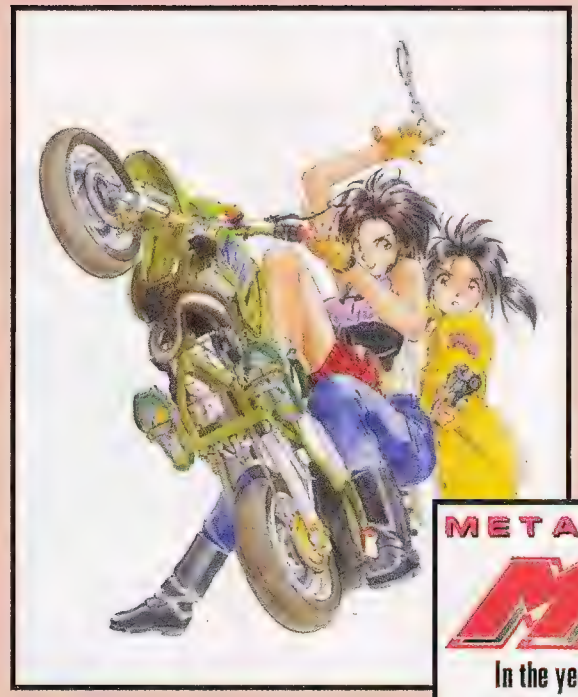
picks of the month

manga:

You're Under Arrest!

(Studio Proteus/Dark Horse Comics, $2.95, 32 pages, eight monthly issues beginning in December)

From the creator of the utterly charming boy-meets-deity *Oh My Goddess!* comes *You're Under Arrest!*, the adventures of Natsumi and Miyuki, two policewomen who solve crimes at Halloween parties and confront panty thieves (panty-snatching being an actual problem in Japan). Created at a time when buddy comics featuring a pair of girls were popular, *You're Under Arrest!* is probably one of the best of this genre, benefiting from Kosuke Fujishima's wry storytelling and slick art.



You're Under Arrest! is a fun caper comic, and not just for fans of Fujishima's other work.

video:

Metal Fighters Miku

(Software Sculptors, $24.95, 13 episodes in six volumes, volumes I (episode 1-3), II (episodes 4-5), and III (episodes 6-7) now available, volume IV (episodes 8-9) ships February 1996, with the remaining volumes shipping every other month)

A long-standing genre in manga has been the sports success story: a young man or woman overcomes some personal adversity, learns the value of self-sacrifice and grows up on the road to champion a sport like tennis, baseball or soccer.

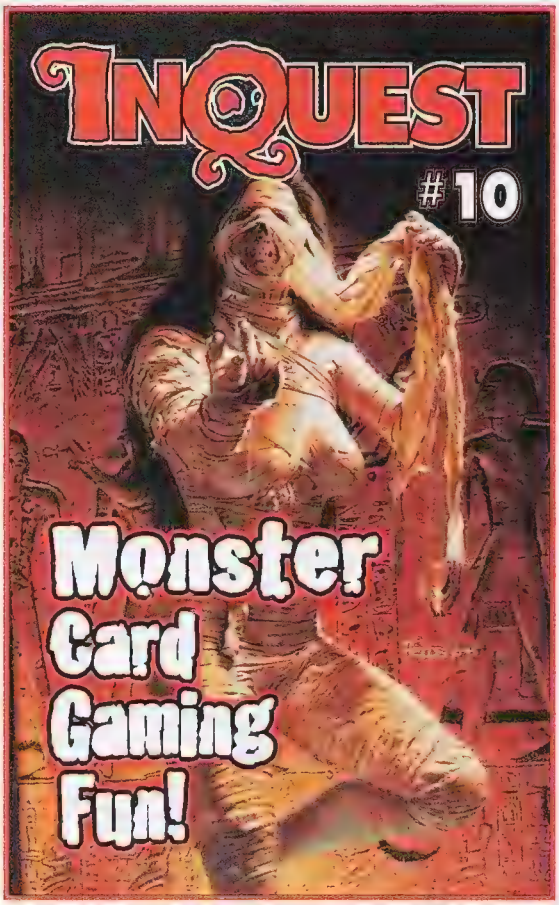
Another ingredient is the loathed (then loved) Coach who nearly always has a shady or painful past that led them to their protégé.

Sports success is an often-traveled road, and yet "Miku" manages to make it new and fun again. In the year 2061, wrestling has evolved into the world's most popular sport, Neo-Pro Wrestling, with combatants clad in armor allowing for dazzling stunts and devastating attacks.

The Pretty Four are an all-girl Neo-Pro Wrestling team led by Miku. Miku's fondest wish is to meet her idol (and wrestling champion) Aquamarine in the championship ring—but the Pretty Four aren't much more than pretty faces until the team's manager hires alcoholic coach Eiichi Suo. The Pretty Four begin a rapid rise in the World Championships, but the girls also have to overcome some out-of-ring plotting by their manager's long-time rival.

The opening and closing songs for this collection of TV episodes are catchy, the character and armor designs are enticing, and the story is soap-opera addictive.

Will Miku wear the championship belt? Only time will tell! ●



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Nothing's Sacred

How many comics do you know with a trio of dinosaurs named Einstein, Huxley and Darwin piloting a stolen spaceship to avoid the Ice Age? How many feature Pope John Paul George and Ringo II and his trusty sidekick Castrato cavorting around like Adam West and Burt Ward from the old "Batman" TV show? How many have Dr. Lifton Freedman, a psychiatrist who cures his patients with ice-pick lobotomies?

Don't worry if the name *Ragmop* doesn't pop into your head; this new series that falls somewhere between a Jack Kirby Fantastic Four adventure and a classic Warner Bros. cartoon is currently the best kept secret in comics.

According to creator and publisher, Rob Walton, "*Ragmop*'s about everything I ever loved as a kid growing up in the '60s. It's also about everything that currently ticks me off. That's why there's so many references and allusions to cartoons, books, movies and television. It's my chance of saying, 'Thank you' to the many creators whose work has influenced me, by integrating those influences into *Ragmop*, and moving them forward in a new direction to achieve different ends, while introducing them to a whole new audience."

Ragmop centers around the adventures of Alice Hawkings, a.k.a. Thrill Kitten, an out-of-work supervillain. Walton assures readers that he will eventually explain why he chose to have a villain as his main character. "That'll all be revealed once we meet her family. As a teenager, Alice was convinced by her mother that she was a 'Bad Girl,' a role she's now acting out as an adult. She's taking her cue from B films of the '50s—back when a woman's reputation could be impugned because she sipped an espresso or wore a pair of pants. It fits into my whole view of misogyny, and how our society views women who don't conform to their pre-subscribed roles of subservience to men."

The first storyline in *Ragmop*, "A Brief History of Crime," is a social and political satire that holds nothing sacred. Hawkings is hired by a group of businessmen and politicians to prevent an asteroid from destroying the Earth by finding the O-Ring, a cosmic device that can control the laws of nature. Surprisingly, Walton thinks that he hasn't reached the limits of his satire. "Right now, I don't think the satire is pushed far enough, given the tone of politics today. I think I'm going much too soft on my subject matter."

Beneath all of the funny stuff, Walton tires to address some serious concerns, like misogyny and the failures of politics and religion. Walton sees an important advantage in taking a humorous approach to his subjects. "Drama is exhausting. Besides, you can wield a sharper scalpel under the guise of comedy than you can with drama. If you play it straight, people are easily overwhelmed and depressed. Criticism is easier to take when it's sweetened with laughter, although it's true most people can't take a joke when they're part of the punch line. It's a double-edged sword."

Walton may be familiar from his more serious work last year as writer and artist on Dark Horse's *Grendel Tales: The Devil's Hammer*, but he got his start in comics in 1986 with Silver Snail Comics' *Pork Knight*, a humor comic about Jim Shooter's regime at Marvel Comics. Walton has also ghost-penciled part

'*Ragmop*'s about everything I ever loved as a kid growing up in the '60s. It's also about everything that currently ticks me off.'

"Quick, get the maiming, lying, yummy donut!" Cover art from *Ragmop* #1.

by tom palmer jr.

of the DC mini-series *The Prisoner*, penciled a Predator story for *Dark Horse Presents* #46 and created *Bloodlines* from Vortex Comics. He is also currently writing "Skade" a story illustrated by Charles Vess and sertalized in Vess' *Book of Ballads and Sagas*.

Recently, Walton has worked in animation storyboarding for Nelvana Productions and other cartoon companies on many TV series including "Tales From the Crypt-Keeper" and "Eek! the Cat." Walton admits that his experience in storyboarding has influenced the way he sees his comic work. "It's affected my work by broadening the humor, but beyond that, storyboards are as different from comic books as theater is from film. Visually, my storyboards are much stronger than my comics, and it's frustrating to figure out why that is. TV directors look at my boards and embrace me. Comic book editors show me the door."

For the time being, Walton has to juggle his storyboarding assignments and his work on *Ragmop*, but he hopes to eventually devote all of his energies to comics. "The pay is wonderful [for storyboarding] and I'd be a fool to give it up. But money isn't my only consideration, so once *Ragmop* supports itself and pays my contribution to the household expenses, I'll be with it full time."

Walton states that he is self-publishing *Ragmop* because no one else would take the risk. "I'm still waiting to hear back from DC and Dark Horse on whether or not they want the series." Walton says he was also inspired by the other self-published books out there. "The success of *Bone* really encouraged me. That showed me there was room in the market for quality books and that they would find their market."

According to Walton, publishing your own comic isn't as easy at it looks. "Critics and my professional colleagues were quick to lend their support, but I still have to bludgeon the retailer into ordering a copy. That said, I have to thank those enlightened retailers who have supported *Ragmop* from the outset selling dozens of copies each issue."

Despite all of the obstacles associated with self-publishing, Walton is grateful for the creative freedom he enjoys. "It's empowering to do this by myself, to control the direction of the stories and how far to push the humor." W

Tom Palmer Jr. is the most serious man on the planet. That's why he can't think of a witty bio this month.

FYI

Ragmop is published bimonthly from Planet Lucy Press, and the fifth issue is due out in February. Unfortunately, subscriptions are not available, so you'll have to bug your local comic shop to order it. And don't forget to check out "Skade" in Charles Vess' bimonthly *Book of Ballads and Sagas*.

Rob Walton's Recommended Reading

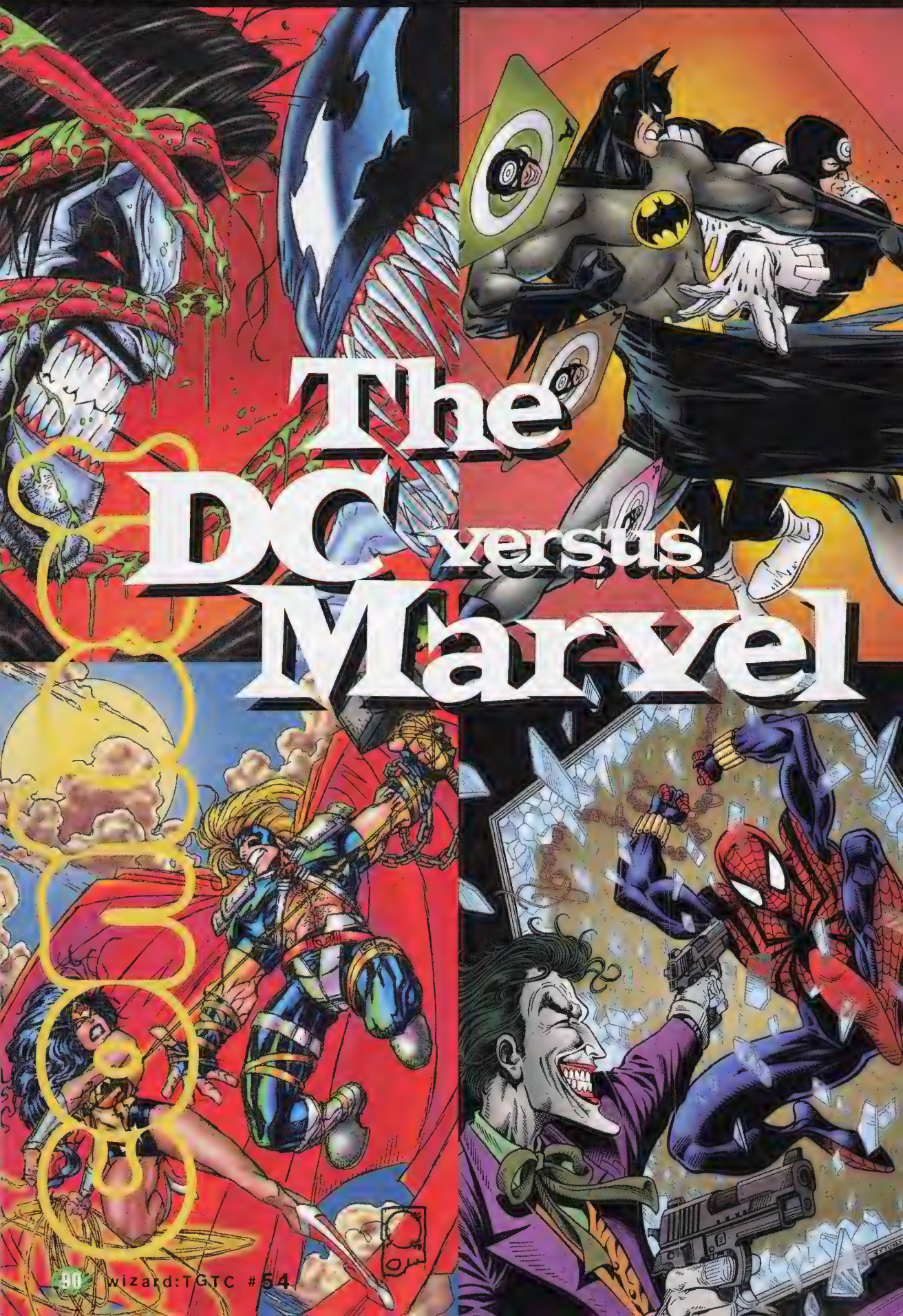
Rob had this to say when I asked him about his current favorite comics: "If you're looking for superhero comics to read, there's more than enough to keep you happy. But if you want to stray a bit and be a little adventurous, it's worth plunking down three bucks for a book you've never heard of or seen. Chances are you're going to find something you'll like." I couldn't have said it better myself. In case you need some pointers, here's what Rob is reading: Steve Bissette's *Tyrant*, *Stray Bullets* by David Lapham, *True Swamp* by Jon Lewis, Charles Vess' *Book of Ballads and Sagas* and Paul Grist's *Kane*.

Recommended Reading

Wolff & Byrd, Counselors of the Macabre Every issue of Batton Lash's *Wolff & Byrd* is a good, solid read. You don't need to know any long, complex back-story to enjoy an issue; the title says it all. Lash is a master of puns, and he's also adept at crafting satisfying, self-contained stories. His distinctive, crisp, black-and-white artwork is a relief from the abundance of cookie-cutter artists out there. While an issue of *Wolff & Byrd* looks and feels like an EC comic, the stories are a strange mix of supernatural weirdness and clever storytelling and humor.
If you can't find *Wolff & Byrd* locally, you can write directly to Exhibit A Press, 4657 Cajon Way, San Diego, CA 92115. Make sure you send $2.50 for a sample or $15 for a six-issue subscription. A trade paperback of the first four issues and two collections of the weekly "Wolff & Byrd" comic strip are also available.

Drawn & Quarterly This high-class anthology gets even better as it goes full-color with issue #4. The features in this issue include a story from Carol Tyler, a one-page "Peanuts"-inspired strip from Seth, and stories from Archer Prewitt and Maurice Vellekoop. The main attraction this time is "The Road to America," a story from French comics master Baru about an Algerian boxer stuck in the middle of his country's struggle to free itself from French colonial rule in the 1950s. Baru's story is enthralling, and it is drawn with a lively, effortless line. This issue is topped off with painted covers and endpapers by Josh Gosfield. If you have trouble finding a copy of *Drawn & Quarterly*, send a check for $6.95 to Drawn & Quarterly Publications, 5550 Jeanne Mance Street #16, Montreal, Quebec, Canada H2V 4K6.

The Two BIGGEST Companies Around Present...



Sure, you've heard all about that wacky DC/Marvel crossover goin' on. Well now YOU get a chance to do a little crossing over yourself. Put on your best dress and do us up a little drawing of a Marvel/DC crossover character of your own. Like, for instance, what would Peter Parker look like if he were Batman? Would he be a Spider-Batman? How about if Clark Kent were the Hulk? Would he be a Superhulk? Let us know by drawing up a mixed-up Marvel/DC character.

Using any medium you want (ink, paint, crayon, Kryptonite) draw your best version of any DC character dressed as any Marvel character or vice versa. You might just win some...

...Crossed-Over Prizes

Grand Prize (1): One lucky reader will get the whole enchilada—one of every DC versus Marvel/Marvel vs. DC crossover and affiliated book. And that's not all! You'll even get one of every affiliated crossover product, like posters and the Fleer/SkyBox trading cards. But wait! That's still not all! The winner gets his entry redrawn by none other than crossover artist supreme Dan Jurgens, and Dan will even give you the original art!

Random Second Chance Drawing (1): One reader, randomly selected from all entries, will win one copy of every *past* DC/Marvel crossover product. That includes: both Superman vs. Spider-Man comics, the Batman vs. Hulk book, *X-Men/Teen Titans*, *Darkseid vs. Galactus*, *Batman/Punisher* and *Punisher/Batman*, *Spider-Man/Batman* and *Green Lantern/Silver Surfer*. Heck, we'll even throw in that *Wizard of Oz* book that no one remembers was a Marvel/DC joint production.

Marvel versus DC Crossover Contest

Fill this sucker out, attach it to your entry, put it in an envelope and send it off to: Crossover Contest, c/o Wizard Press, P.O. Box 118, Congers, NY 10920-0118.

[illegible] February 28, 1996.

This month's contest is sponsored by DC and Marvel, those lovable crossover freaks.

Crossed-Up Legal Text

No purchase necessary. Contest is open to anyone except employees of Wizard Press, DC Comics, Marvel Comics and their immediate families or anyone who wears his mother's pumps. You've got enough to worry about. Print your name, date of birth, address, city, state, zip and telephone number with area code on the official entry form or a 3-by-5 inch index card and attach it to your entry. Enter as many times as you like. Mail each entry separately to: Crossover Contest, c/o Wizard Press, P.O. Box 118, Congers, NY 10920-0118. No mechanical reproductions of completed forms are accepted but you can photocopy the entry form before filling it out if you don't want to mess up your magazine. All entries become property of Wizard Press and none will be returned. All taxes (federal, state and local, if any) will be the responsibility of the prize winners. No cash equivalent or substitute prizes will be offered. Prizes are awarded in the name of the contest winners and are not transferable. Offer void where prohibited, regulated or restricted by law in a manner inconsistent with the purposes and rules hereof. Gabba-gabba hey! Gabba gabba gabba hey! All entries must be received at contest headquarters by February 28, 1996. Wizard Press is not responsible for lost, late, misdirected or mutilated entries. Odds of winning will be determined by the number of valid entries received prior to the closing date of the contest. Prize winners will be selected based on creativity for the Grand Prize and by random drawing for the Runner-Up by Wizard Press. Drawing and judging will take place on March 15, 1996.

For a list of winners, available after March 15, 1996, send a self-addressed stamped envelope to: Crossover Winners, c/o Wizard Press, P.O. Box 118, Congers, NY 10920-0118.

The DC versus Marvel/ Marvel versus DC Crossover Contest!

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TRAILER PARK

Wizard's column about Hollywood and TV and stuff like that

Decision '97: BATS or DINOSAURS?

WILL BATMAN MEET HIS MATCH IN THE "JURASSIC PARK" SEQUEL?

The fourth Batman film could receive stern competition if it is released in the summer of 1997. That's when "The Lost World," the sequel to "Jurassic Park," is scheduled to reach theaters.

Steven Spielberg, who directed "Jurassic Park" to more than $900 million worldwide at the box office, has said he will direct this mammoth sequel, which will be adapted from Michael Crichton's best-selling book by David Koepp, who also co-wrote the screenplay for "Jurassic" with Crichton. There has been no casting yet, although actor Jeff Goldblum's character, Ian Malcolm, appears in the book version of "The Lost World."

Meanwhile, rumors continue to swirl over the fourth Batman film. Akiva Goldsman, who co-wrote "Batman Forever," is expected to complete a script by January 1996. Poison Ivy and Mr. Freeze are the villains, and latest reports indicate the movie may also introduce Batgirl.

Director Joel Schumacher will be back, but has avoided getting involved in the casting gossip, such as Julia Roberts or Demi Moore as Poison Ivy or Patrick Stewart as Mr. Freeze.

"At this point, all we have is a germ of an idea, a script in the process of being written and a target date to begin shooting—next September," Schumacher told Scripps Howard News Service. "It bothers me when reporters make up stories about who's getting a big role. I always feel that when an actor is said to be up for a role and then doesn't get it, it's as if they lost out. That's not only untrue, it's unfair."

Actors Val Kilmer and Chris O'Donnell should be back as Batman and Robin. Kilmer, who is starring in "The Island of Dr. Moreau," also has been linked to a film version of "The Saint" (a classic detective show starring Roger Moore) from Paramount Pictures.

"Batman Forever" could wind up as the most popular Batman movie on home video.

The film was released on home video Oct. 31 and topped the Billboard charts, selling some three million tapes in its first week. Sources at Warner Bros. say it could sell as many as 10 million copies. ■ *Rob Allstetter*

X-MEN FILMS ROLL A SEVEN

A string of murders patterned after the seven deadly sins: Yeah, right. Who could have known that "Seven" was headed for box-office seventh heaven? That it would be the most powerfully uncompromising film to come out of Hollywood this year? Well, the folks behind Marvel's planned "X-Men" movie seem to have had a pretty good inkling: A couple of years back, they tapped screenwriter Andrew Kevin Walker to tackle the mutant comic adaptation after catching the early buzz on Walker's "Seven" script. On the other hand, maybe it wasn't

Batman Forever photo courtesy of Warner Bros.

such a good inkling: Walker's "X-Men" draft was set aside a year ago to give someone else a go at the material, and he has since moved on to another story. (The current writer of record is industry rookie Laeta Kalogridis, who has attracted attention of late for a Joan of Arc screenplay she sold to über-producer Joel Silver.)

Still, producer Lauren Shuler-Donner, who is overseeing "X-Men" with her husband, "Superman" and "Lethal Weapon" director Richard Donner, draws an emphatic distinction between shelving Walker's script and burying it completely. "Both scripts are great, so we'd like to combine them," Shuler-Donner said. "Andy's characterization is fantastic, and Laeta has streamlined the story. Suffice it to say we're now onto looking at directors; that's how good a job they both did." No word yet from the Donners about which directors they're courting, but it looks like the big-screen Wolverine may wind up being something of a deadly sinner after all. ■ *Tom Russo*

X-FILES LAND IN SPRINGFIELD!

"X-Files" stars David Duchovny and Gillian Anderson have already proven they've got quite a comic streak—with a little help from Topps, that is. But now they're about to get *really* animated, courtesy of "The Simpsons." Duchovny and Anderson (who play agents Fox Mulder and Dana Scully, respectively) recently completed the voice work for a special "Simpsons" episode called "The Springfield Files," slated to air next spring. "Homer is on his way home from the bar and cuts across a field and ends up seeing an alien," Anderson explained. "So Mulder and Scully come into the picture, and Mulder says, 'There's another UFO sighting in the heart of America!' And Scully says, 'But there's a bust going down with drugs and illegal weapons somewhere else.' And Mulder says, 'Ah, the FBI's not concerned with that.' " And then there's perhaps the biggest toontown mystery of all, Anderson added with a laugh: "I'm very curious to see what shade of yellow we are." ■ *Tom Russo*

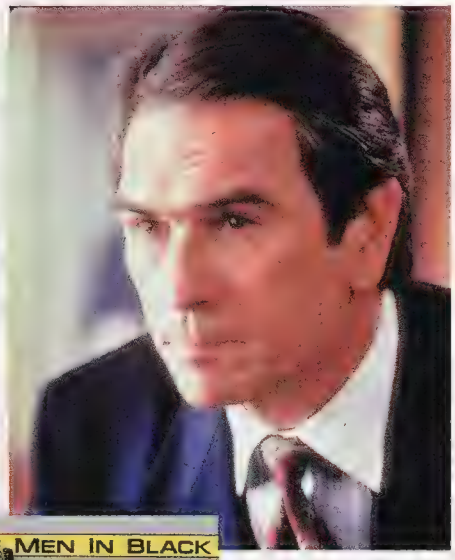
DAVID DUCHOVNY LENDS HIS VOICE TO A SPECIAL "X-FILES" PARODY ON "THE SIMPSONS"

ROADBLOCK FOR GHOST RIDER?

Ghost Rider could have a hell of a ride ahead of him before he blazes onto the big screen. That's how it looked, anyway when beleaguered Savoy Pictures, the company adapting the comic, announced recently that it was retreating from the movie business to concentrate on TV projects. But according to a Marvel Films production exec, Marvel and Savoy will be damned if they're not going to get the movie made.

Although Savoy has been on the Hollywood map for only a short time, flops like "Exit to Eden" have so far outweighed modest hits like "Tales from the Hood" that the company was compelled to yell "Cut!" Almost immediately, entertainment headlines were screaming about Savoy's plans to sell off its projects in development, among them the next Tom Clancy espionage blockbuster. This was hardly great news for Marvel Films, which has made a point of seeking out top producers and studios to avoid repeating fly-by-nightmares like "The Punisher." (In Marvel's defense, Savoy also persuaded an ultra-choosy Howard Stern that they were the right company to turn his book *Private Parts* into a movie.)

Ghost Rider, though, will remain unaffected by the tumult, insisted Marvel Films production VP Matt Edelman. "Savoy is sticking with it," said Edelman, who noted that director Russell Mulcahy ("Highlander," "The Shadow") is now on board to helm the movie. "They're still going to make five to seven films a year, and 'Ghost Rider' has been identified as a top priority for them to hold on to." ■ *Tom Russo*



TOMMY LEE JONES OPTS FOR "BLACK"

MALIBU MOVIE NEWS

Chris O'Donnell and Tommy Lee Jones impressed audiences as enemies Robin and Two-Face in "Batman Forever," but they won't be teaming up as partners as expected in the upcoming adaptation of Malibu's *Men in Black*. Although Jones and "Addams Family" director Barry Sonnenfeld are both locked in for this tale of "X-Files"-ish feds on the supernatural prowl (actually, the short-lived comic *preceded* Fox's smash series by a few years), O'Donnell reportedly passed on the project to avoid sidekick overkill. It seems the new Robin did such a bang-up job of making audiences forget Burt Ward, he helped encourage Batman's producers to move up the series' next installment to summer '97. O'Donnell's replacement in the secret agent film is "Fresh Prince" Will Smith, another very high-caliber actor pick for a movie based on a book with a circulation of only 6,000.

Principal photography on the film is expected to begin in March.

As for success predictions, one suitably impressed industry insider remarked, "*The Crow* had more visibility as a comic, and practically nobody knew that *was* a comic." And there may be bigger things to come. Malibu has already announced plans to bring Prime to the big screen, and a company staffer reported that screenwriters are also at work on a pair of spec

David Duchovny photo courtesy of FOX. Tommy Lee Jones/The Client/Everett Collection

scripts featuring Rune and Mantra. If the overachieving publisher has its way, in a few years Hollywood's going to be pretty well-Ultraversed. ■ *Tom Russo*

SPIDEY, X-MEN RULE

The Spider-Man and X-Men animated series continue to be a powerful one-two punch for Fox. During the opening November sweeps ratings, "Spider-Man" finished first and "X-Men" second for viewers ages 6 to 17 on Saturday mornings. "The Tick" has remained a top-five show for Fox, while "The Mask" is a top-10 show for CBS, despite going up against Spider-Man.

Meanwhile, Malibu is claiming strong early ratings for its UltraForce animated series.

According to Malibu, "UltraForce" has reigned over children's programming in 15 of the top 25 markets, including Los Angeles, Philadelphia and San Francisco. The series earned national attention on the news wires for the Nov. 5 episode, which featured the death of Pixx. The actual death of any cartoon character in America is a truly rare event, so this added to the episode's shock value. ■ *Rob Allstetter*

BRUNO GETS VIRUS

John Bruno, a long-time visual effects supervisor who has worked with James Cameron, will make his directing debut on "Virus," based on the Dark Horse comic, for producer Gail Anne Hurd and Universal.

According to *The Hollywood Reporter*, the "Virus" script by Richard Jeffries will be set on a ship at sea. Bruno should be familiar with water, recently helping on "Waterworld" and working with Cameron on his current project, "Titanic." ■ *Rob Allstetter*

KEVIN AS KULL

Kevin Sorbo will likely be bringing his sword to the big screen. But not as who you'd think According to *Daily Variety*, Sorbo, who stars in the syndicated television series "Hercules: The Legendary Journeys," has been in final negotiations to star in "Kull the Conqueror," a live-action film based on the Robert E. Howard character who has appeared in Marvel comics.

The project, from Universal Pictures, is expected to film this summer with a budget of nearly $30 million. "Kull the Conqueror" was written by Charles Pogue and will be produced by Raffaella De Laurentis. No director has been named yet.

Daily Variety reported that Sorbo, a former model whose "Hercules" show has become a ratings sensation, could receive as much as $1.75 million to play Kull. Adding to the achievements of the show itself, Topps Comics will launch an ongoing *Hercules* series in early 1996; it's very possible that the comic may garner "X-Files"-like fandom. ■ *Rob Allstetter*

Kevin Sorbo/Legend of Hercules/Everett Collection

HERCULES IS SET TO CONQUER KULL

SHORT TAKES

Mike France is writing a Fantastic Four script for Chris Columbus at 20th Century Fox. France wrote the Sylvester Stallone film "Cliffhanger" and the first draft of the new James Bond film, "Goldeneye." Despite rumors of a possible video release, the first Fantastic Four film remains shelved, where it's been for two years now. An Iron Man movie, also from Fox, is currently being passed around to prospective directors...Following the merger of Turner Broadcasting with Time-Warner, Turner has purchased the off-network rights to "Lois & Clark: The New Adventures of Superman." "Lois & Clark," produced by Warner Bros. Television for ABC, will be available for a Turner cable network beginning in September of 1997, unless ABC gives permission for an earlier run. "Lois & Clark" is currently in its third season on ABC....After the sequel feature film did tremendous box office work in November, "Ace Ventura: Pet Detective" premiered in animation with a half-hour CBS holiday special on Dec. 16.

The episode, entitled "The Rein-Deer Hunter," was written by Duane Capizzi, who has also recently written for "The Mask" and "Savage Dragon" animated series, and was directed by David Pemberton.

"Ace Ventura: Pet Detective" will become a weekly Saturday morning series in January.

GEN[13] SNEAK PEEK

Although the Gen[13] animated movie isn't due out until later in 1996, here's an advance peek at the animator's character designs, which are headed up by director Kevin Altieri ("Batman: The Animated Series"). The direct-to-video movie will be an adaptation of the original *Gen*[13] mini-series. Enjoy this special preview!

THRESHOLD FAIRCHILD

MORE GEN[13] STUFF...

GRUNGE

IVANA

JOHN LYNCH

W

Wizard Press Presents...

Roll the Bones...

...with special Madman and Milk and Cheese dice!

Having fun with *Wizard:* The Board Game? Just think how much better your game experience will be when you use these special *Wizard*-exclusive Madman, and Milk and Cheese dice! Each die has fine-crafted molded images of the *Wizard* logo and one of the board game characters. We've even made it nice-'n'-easy for you to order. Just fill out the coupon and drop it in the mail with two bucks to cover postage and handling for a cool pair of dice—one Madman, one Milk and Cheese.

But order today—this baby is a *Wizard* exclusive, not available anywhere else. Don't miss out! Order today to get yours before time or the supply runs out!

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THIS AMAZING OFFER EXPIRES FEBRUARY 28, 1996, SO MOVE IT!

Madman/Milk and Cheese Dice Exclusive Offer

I would like to order_____ (quantity) pairs of dice (one Madman and one Milk and Cheese per pair).

I enclose $2 per pair to cover postage and handling. Total dollar amount enclosed $_____

Name _____ Date of Birth _____

Address _____

City _____ State _____ Zip _____

Fun Print!

Each request for a pair of dice must be accompanied by $2 shipping and handling, $3 in Canada, $5 for other foreign. Remit by check or money order only. Do not send cash. All payment must be in U.S. funds drawn on a U.S. bank. OFFER GOOD ONLY WHILE SUPPLY LASTS. Requests are processed on a first-come, first-served basis. Please allow eight to 12 weeks for delivery. Changes of address will not be forwarded unless Wizard Press is notified in writing by February 28, 1996. THIS OFFER EXPIRES FEBRUARY 28, 1996.

CBIQ

COMIC BOOK INTELLIGENCE QUOTIENT

HEY! YEAH, YOU. THINK YOU GOT YOUR POOP IN A GROUP WHEN IT COMES TO COMIC BOOK TRIVIA? THEN PUT YOUR MONEY WHERE YOUR MOUTH IS AND STEP UP AGAINST 20 OF THE HARDEST QUESTIONS PUT TOGETHER BY A BAND OF HORMONALLY IMBALANCED FANBOYS.

1) In the early days of the X-Men, which former villain did Professor X try to recruit for the X-Men?
A) The Sandman
B) The Sub-Mariner
C) Molten Man
D) Beast Boy

2) Who "allegedly" killed Fairchild's dad?
A) Spawn
B) Grunge
C) Helmut
D) Lynch

3) In what city was Peter Parker suspected of murder?
A) Los Angeles, California
B) Boston, Massachusetts
C) Salt Lake City, Utah
D) New York City, 'cause that's where the Marvel offices are, and after that whole clone storyline, most considered it a mercy killing

4) Which Marvel character does not have the Super Soldier formula in his or her blood?
A) Red Skull
B) Diamondback
C) U.S. Agent
D) Captain America

5) Despero's mind was taken over by:
A) Bloodwynd.
B) L-Ron.
C) L-Ron Hubbard.
D) L-Ron Fuhrman.

6) Who manages Springfield's Kwik-E-Mart?
A) Apu Nahasapeemapetilon
B) Apu Napeemahasolonipet
C) Apu Nahoogivsaratsass
D) Barney Gumble

7) On his very first outing as a superhero, the Shroud first tried to defeat what supervillain?
A) The Hangman
B) Dr. Doom
C) The Scorpion
D) The Kingpin

8) Evil Ernie's dad belonged to what superhero group?
A) The Masters of Evil
B) The Sentinels of Justice
C) Agents of T.H.U.N.D.E.R.
D) The Revengers

9) Who once hired Lobo to snuff Santa?
A) Darkseid
B) The Easter Bunny
C) Vril Dox (he thinks Santa's not logical)
D) The ACLU ('cause Santa's not multicultural)

10) Which X-Man was also a Defender and a Champion?
A) Beast
B) Iceman
C) Wolverine
D) Jubilee

11) Which Avengers were recently killed in *Avengers: The Crossing*?
A) Sersi and Gilgamesh
B) Sersi and The Black Knight
C) Yellowjacket and Gilgamesh
D) Mockingbird and Thunderstrike

12) Who animated Primevil?
A) Necromantra
B) Ghoul
C) Lady Death
D) Rune (with the aid of them swell Rune-gem things)

13) Which hero has never been a police officer?
A) Spawn
B) Captain America
C) The Savage Dragon
D) The Guardian (DC version)

14) Whose gams are longer?
A) Fairchild's
B) Rainmaker's
C) Freefall's
D) Stilt-Man's

15) Which Image character teamed up with the heroes of 1963?
A) WildStar
B) ShadowHawk
C) Prophet
D) Brandon Choi

THIS TIME, WE'RE GRADING YOU AGAINST THE MORE MIRACULOUS RESURRECTIONS IN COMICS, SO THE HIGHER YOUR SCORE, THE MORE IMPLAUSIBLE THE COMEBACK. LOOK IN THIS ISSUE'S BULLPEN FOR THE ANSWERS.

SCORE	RANK
0-4	Thanos: Was killed until he was dead, but then Death opened a "soul chest" and brought him back to life. What?
5-14	Elektra: Throat slit, run through by a sai, bled a lot, buried, but some ninjas prayed for her, touched her forhead and she woke up. Nutty.
15-19	Jean Grey: Blasted to space atoms by an alien weapon, but woke up in a cocoon at the bottom of a bay. Kooky!
20	Spider-Clone: Got blown up by a bomb or something, pronounced dead, corpse dropped down smokestack, got better. Lucky us.

16) When choosing a new name, why did Spider-Man go with Ben Reilly?
A) It was the name of the burglar who killed his uncle
B) That was the name the Jackal pre-programmed into his mind so he could find him even if he kept his Spider-Man identity low-profile
C) Ben for his Uncle Ben, and Reilly for his Aunt May's maiden name
D) Peter Parker's middle name is Benjamin and he was born in Reilly, New York

17) Which of the following is The Punisher's arch-nemesis?
A) Deathstroke the Terminator
B) Ravager
C) Jigsaw
D) Reverse-Punisher

18) What Vertigo character once belonged to the Justice League?
A) Animal Man
B) Swamp Thing
C) Sandman
D) Robotman

19) Which of these heroes was able to lift Thor's hammer?
A) Spider-Man
B) Hercules
C) Captain America
D) The Hulk, when he was really, really mad

20) Why is Violator so obsessed with killing Spawn?
A) It's the only way he'll be allowed back into Heaven
B) It's a comic book. What other reason does he need?
C) He's jealous because he wanted to be chosen as Spawn
D) He's a big Peter David fan

JUNK DRAWER

Little bits of everything that we couldn't stretch into a full-page newsy thing

GI JOE GETS BUFF!

The GI Joe Extreme line will be unveiled in February of 1996, and it's based on the new animation series and Dark Horse comic book series. The storyline takes place in the year 2011, where the Joes must take on a new evil known only as S.K.A.R. (Soldiers of Kaos, Anarchy and Ruin). The basic figures, measuring five inches in height, each retail for $5.99 and include: Lt. Stone, the leader of this new team, with his semi-automatic gatling gun; Ballistic, an excellent marksman, who uses his quick-aim combat action to take down the enemy; Metalhead, the computer freak, who's armed with a heavy metal (no, not Twisted Sister) missile launcher; Freight, a former football player, whose strong arm blocks can knock the enemy on its ass; and Sgt. Savage, the group's artillery expert, who comes with a power-launch catapult. And then there's the bad guys: Iron Klaw, the evil leader of S.K.A.R., uses his battle-activated assault rocket to take over the world, while Inferno, S.K.A.R.'s Sky Stalker Squadron leader, comes with a flamethrower!

The new GI Joe Figures! Across top, l. to r.: Inferno, Freight, Sgt. Savage; Middle: Lt. Stone; Across bottom, l. to r.: Iron Klaw, Ballistic, Metalhead.

There's also a bunch of deluxe figures ($7.99) armed with Long-Distance Ultra SLAM Firepower (Sounds like fun!), including Deluxe Lt. Stone, Deluxe Metalhead, Deluxe Ballistic and Deluxe Iron Klaw. Several of these figures are available in packs, by the way.

As for vehicles, there's the Road Bullet Cycle ($7.99), which gives Joe and Co. the chance to make some quick strikes against those bad boys of S.K.A.R. The Sand Striker ($9.99) is a two-in-one vehicle that lets GI Joe Extreme fight on land or sea, while the Bone Splitter ($9.99) gives S.K.A.R. a shot at destroying GI Joe with its Long-Distance Ultra SLAM Firepower and front-mounted chainsaw blades.

But wait—there's more!

The Detonator ($14.99), which comes with an exclusive Sgt. Savage figure with power-punching action, is a friggin' cannon that has that Ultra SLAM Firepower action. Then there's the Spitfire, an awesome force of destruction that fires all sorts of missiles and stuff, but has a hair-triggered sensor target on the battle platform to take down the evil battle station itself.

You say you want air assault? Okay, then try out the Tiger Hawk ($19.99), a rapid deployment stealth helicopter with three rapid-fire missile blasts that gives GI Joe Extreme free reign in the sky. But S.K.A.R. has the Sky Stalker Jet ($19.99), complete with two quick-fire mega-missiles.

And finally, there's the Thunderin' Fury Tank ($25.99), with mega-missiles and a rotating turret that lets Joe roll right over S.K.A.R.

Whew! All that should keep ya busy for a few days, at least.

THESE COMICS ARE MINT, BABY!

Everyone knows it's next to impossible to get a hold of comics in Mint (as in perfect) condition, but now, thanks to Highland Mint, you can! Well, kind of. Starting in early '96, the company will be putting out bronze, silver and gold-plated replicas of Marvel comic covers and Fleer comic cards. These Mint-Cards, measuring 2 1/2 inches by 3 1/2 inches, will depict some historic comic

Mint Card

covers and characters, including the X-Men, Spider-Man, Captain America and more. Each Mint-Card includes a certificate of authenticity and is packaged in a numbered album and a Lucite display. Here's the suggested retail for each of these snappy metal replicas: $50 for bronze, $235 for silver and $500 for gold. Mint-Cards will only be available from authorized Mint-Card retailers, who can call 1-800-544-6135 for more information. You can also call this number for info on your nearest Mint-Card retailer.

HOMEWORK WAS NEVER THIS EASY

Yeah, everyone uses those Cliffs Notes today rather than reading those long-winded books (Though you SHOULD read the originals! They're great stuff!). But chances are your parents took a shortcut or two by reading some cool comic book adaptations of famous novels, known as *Classics Illustrated.* These Classics have been updated for the '90s, as they'll soon be available on CD-ROMs. Classics International Entertainment recently reached an agreement with Compumag to produce CD-ROMs in English, Japanese, French, Italian and German, based on a whole slew of classic literature. The current plan is to release five CD-ROMs in April retailing for regular CD-ROM prices (somewhere under $50). The first five titles to be released will be *Moby Dick*, *The Adventures of Tom Sawyer*, *The Call of the Wild* (It's got wolves; ya gotta love it!), *Aesop's Fables* and *A Christmas Carol.* Look for them at your local comic, video game, computer and even book stores.

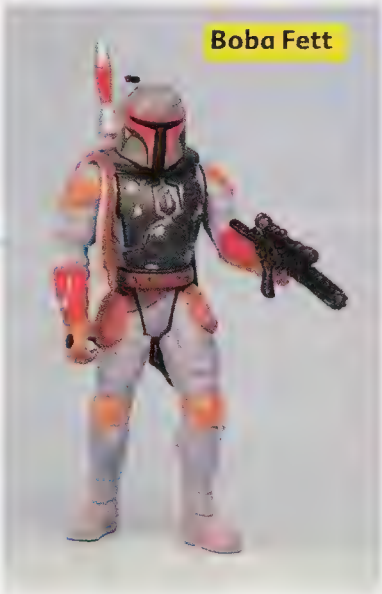
A NEW 'ZINE ON THE SCENE

There's a new CD-ROM magazine in town. *DigiZINE* features the latest in music, movies and pop culture, and even includes contests giving you a chance to win some nifty comic book prizes. The first few issues, the first of which shipped in October, feature a special Marvel Comics section. February's issue includes an exclusive Marvel interactive comic of "The Life of Bob Marley." Suggested retail for *DigiZINE* is $9.99.

SHE'S GOT THREE WHAT?!?

No, you're not seeing double…er, triple. Skeema here's what we call extra-developed. Anyway, DigiVision Studios' *Skeema* is a CD containing six alternative rock songs, a narrated sci-fi adventure with cool sound effects, and a full-color compact comic. So what's the story? Well, the young heroine Skeema must protect her planet Niptet from the evil Dr. Emussus' cardacular virus. With the help of her pet Octechpussy, she tries to save Niptet and Emussus' next target: Earth! *Skeema*, retailing for $12, is available this January in comic book stores everywhere.

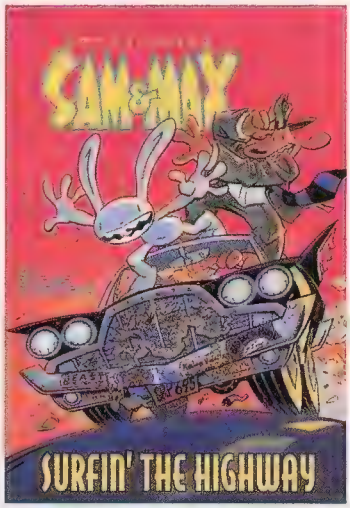
WE'VE GOT THE FETT!


Boba Fett

All you *Star Wars* freaks (Hey, that includes us!) can start droolin' a little more. December finally sees the release of three awesome-lookin' new figures: Boba Fett (YESSSSSSS!), Luke Skywalker in X-Wing Pilot Gear and that hip guy Lando Calrissian. Now if those fine folks over at Kenner would just put out that super-awesome Hoth-trashin' AT-AT (Sorry, but my mom would never let me get one before), the world would be at peace.

ANIMAL COPS AND TASTY WEASELS

Ya like to laugh? Sure ya do. Know how to read? Ya better, or these words'll mean nothing to ya, punk! Anyway, run out now to your local bookshop and pick up the Sam & Max trade paperback *Surfin' the Highway* by that wacky guy Steve Purcell. (The guy's either a real genius or else he's sniffed waaay too much Drano.) These freelance police are none other than a quick-talking, private eye-type dog (that's Sam) and a cute li'l bunny who's got a huge thirst for violence and loves eatin' weasels on a stick (that's Max). Their adventures are an absolute riot. In fact, you'll laugh so hard you'll rupture yer pancreas or somethin'. This collection, which retails for a mere $12.95, features all the duo's previous appearances (including some obscure ones), a board game, a make-it-yerself flip book and the ever-popular Disguise-O-Rama. Go crazy!



JUNK DRAWER

Toy Story

Here's a quick rundown on some late-breaking toy news:

Toy Biz

The highly anticipated X-Men: Age of Apocalypse line is due out in January 1996. The line-up will include Apocalypse (with Shadow King), Cyclops (with Cybernetic Guardian), Magneto, Sabretooth (with Wildchild), and Weapon X. Toy Biz reports that the intended Gambit figure has been canceled. Word on the street is that Gambit will be re-tooled and issued at a later date.

The Spring '96 line-up of Spider-Man figures will include Carnage Unleashed, Man-Spider, Octo Spidey, Tombstone and Web Cannon Spider-Man. The release date is set for February 1996. And speaking of Spidey, according to Toy Biz sources, it's likely that no more 10-inch figures in the Animated Spider-Man line will be produced.

Most collectors may already be aware that the U.S.Agent figure was pulled from the most recent Iron Man assortment. And in the Fantastic Four line, Adam Warlock was replaced by Attuma.

McFarlane Toys

At least six new figures will be added to McFarlane Toys' Spawn line tentatively slated for February 1996 including The Maxx, a new Clown, Cy-Gor, ShadowHawk, She-Spawn and Exo-Skeleton Spawn.

Playmates

Slated for a pre-Christmas release, Playmates' Star Trek: Voyager line includes Captain Janeway, Tuvok, B'Elanna Torres, Neelix and the Doctor. Figures of other Voyager crew members and the aliens they encounter will be introduced by Playmates in the spring of 1996. Suggested retail will be $6-$8 per figure.

Also, Savage Dragon—Image Comics' crime-fighting cop from Chicago—is but one of four new action figures that captures the intensity of the popular comic book series. In addition to Dragon, look for figures of Battle Damaged Dragon, She-Dragon and Barbaric. Playmates plans for a December 1995 release. Suggested retail on each figure will be $6-$8.

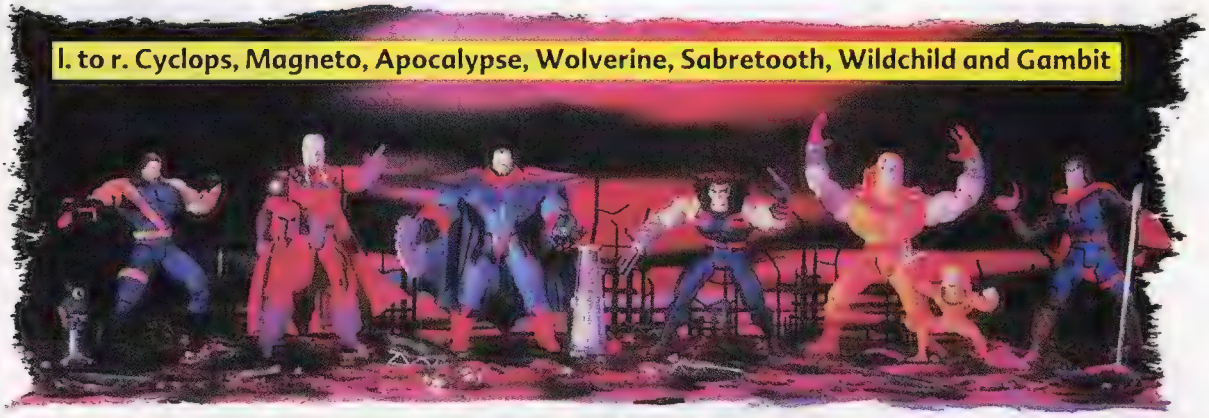
As a personal tribute to the legendary Teenage Mutant Ninja Turtles, Image artist Jim Lee has given Raphael, Michaelangelo and Donatello a tough and hard-edged superhero look. The three action figures come fully equipped with villain-thrashing weapons. The Jim Lee Turtle series, retailing for $6-$8 per figure, will hit stores in December 1995.

Galoob

The word is out on 1996's spring line of UltraForce figures. Expect to see the following: Radiation Hardcase, Night Man Desert Heat, Blue Steel NM-E, Solar Prototype and Queen Topaz. A reported 35 figures will complete the UltraForce line.

The Maxx

ShadowHawk



l. to r. Cyclops, Magneto, Apocalypse, Wolverine, Sabretooth, Wildchild and Gambit

l. to r. Octo Spidey, Carnage, Man-Spider, Tombstone and Web Cannon Spider-Man

InQuest™

THE GUIDE TO COLLECTIBLE CARD GAMES

The most complete **Magic: The Gathering™ price guide** you'll dig up anywhere!

Monster Card Gaming Fun!

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JUNK DRAWER video games

by Steve Brown

Star Wars

Coming in mid 1996 is a never-been-told Star Wars story to the Nintendo Ultra 64 video game system. *Star Wars: Shadows of the Empire* will be exclusive to the Ultra 64 and will give players a visually stunning, immersive, lightning-paced gameplay experience. The story itself is set in the time between "Empire Strikes Back" and "Return of the Jedi," and delves deep into the criminal underworld. Starring a powerful new Star Wars baddie (I couldn't weasel any more information on him out of those LucasArts people), you must also contend with Boba Fett, Jabba and Lord Vader himself. A snowspeeder mode will feature 3-D techniques only available on high-end, more expensive computer systems. "*Shadows of the Empire* is an important addition to the Star Wars Universe, and I'm glad LucasArts and Nintendo can bring this new story to a true interactive platform," explained legendary Star Wars creator George Lucas. "It's exciting to have these adventures—which have become so much a part of our entertainment history—continue to thrive in this evolving medium." The video game is the central element in an entire multimedia rollout of the new Star Wars story. *Shadows of the Empire* will involve the simultaneous release of the game, a novel by Bantam, the Dark Horse comic series and a Topps trading card series illustrated by the Brothers Hildebrandt. More details to come.

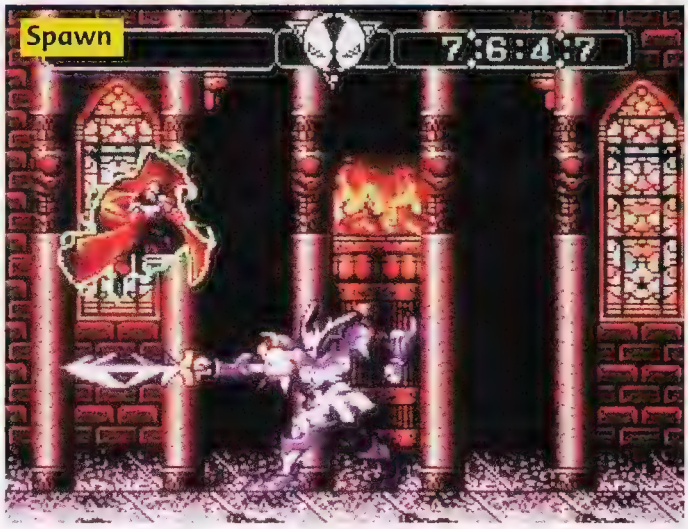
Wolfenstein 3-D

Wolfenstein 3-D is now available for the first time on 3DO. *Wolfenstein 3-D* puts you in a fast, first person virtual world where you have been captured and taken prisoner in the Nazi prison of Castle Wolfenstein. This state-of-the-art game features 60 levels of non-stop action that will give gamers some major couch sores. *Wolfenstein 3-D* gives the realism of actually being there by zipping you through Castle Wolfenstein with pistols, rifles and machine guns as your only friends. Brought to you by the creators of *Doom*, *Wolfenstein 3-D* may be perceived as another *Doom* knockoff but, ironically, it's the other way around, as *Castle Wolfenstein* predates *Doom* by over ten years.

Spawn

Spawn, the SNES-only video game from Acclaim, brings the rockin' Image comic book to video life. *Spawn the Video Game* is exactly what hardcore fans of Spawn deserve. Joining Al Simmons is his entire supporting crew: Malebolgia, lord of darkness; Overtkill, Mafia-created cyborg; Angela, crusader of light; Redeemer, sent to Earth to eliminate Spawn; New Breed, neural parasite; Violator, a demonic horror of ghastly proportions; The Mad One, a renegade crusader against evil, and the Butcher, a.k.a. Billy Kincaid the child murderer. Wow, Acclaim has put a lot of detail into this game.

As far as actual gameplay goes, *Spawn* excels in the extra powers department. One downside to using any special powers is that it decreases your life points...game over, totally, no continues. The key to unleashing your frightful powers is in button execution a la *Mortal Kombat*. The most useful of the eight available is the "heal yourself," although its cost is massive. It mirrors Spawn's comic situation; he must decrease his life span in order to survive. I would suggest using this special power only when facing an end-level boss. They're tough and very frustrating but the key to victory is finding a move and power combination that allows you to avoid the bosses' attack. The Redeemer, an early but very tough boss, has a widening blast that can't be avoided—concentrate on damaging him with a leaping kick followed by a crouching punch. You have to get to him early or his barrage of telekinetically controlled mannequins will stop you from getting to him. *Spawn* is a well done side scroller for the advanced gamer. The storyline is very violent with its theme of child abuse, torture and murder. Spawn's own niece, Cyan, is being held captive for



Spider-Man: Separation Anxiety

Malebolgia and only you and Spawn can save her.

Spider-Man: Separation Anxiety

Acclaim has also released *Separation Anxiety* for Sega Genesis and SNES 16-bit systems. This *Maximum Carnage* redux features a pre-Ben Reilly storyline, possibly the last appearance of Peter Parker in a Spider-Man video game. In a two-player cooperative mode, Venom and Spidey team up to get the job done. It seems Venom is suffering from separation anxiety over losing his new "children" (five deadly Symbiotes spawned from his costume), and he knows he must destroy them before another Carnage is created! The action ranges from a modern metropolis to the Life Foundation's high security Doomsday Bunker. Standing in our heroes way are Carnage (the ultimate marriage of madness and alien matter) and the Jury, brutish soldiers in powersuits who follow their own moral code, passing final judgment. Guilty? Well, the sentence is extermination for Venom and Spider-Man. Also lurking are the five Symbiotes, joined to morally bankrupt soldiers. With villains as formidable as these, thankfully, there are some computer-controlled backup heroes to give Venom and Spidey a fighting chance. There's Captain America who flings his shield to destroy enemies. Ghost Rider roars to the rescue and destroys enemies with his mystic chain. Hawkeye will empty his quiver at your foes. And good ol' Daredevil's always willing to lend a hand, arm, leg or whatever it takes. So get over your anxiety and check this one out!

Primal Rage

Primal Rage

Thanks to a Goldstar/Time Warner software deal, the arcade fighting thriller *Primal Rage* will be perfectly recreated for the 3DO system. The game, due out in early '96, is an unbelievable translation with identical graphics and game play which leaves all past versions in the primordial ooze! It's just what the 3DO needed to compete in the high-end 32-bit sweepstakes. This cutting-edge fighting game is different than others of its genre, in that you play vicious, bloodthirsty dinosaurs rather than simple humans. And we ain't talkin' Barney!

Vectorman

Genesis gamers can now embark on a robotic rescue mission to save Earth. Vectorman, our hero, jumps higher, shoots faster and moves smoother than any previous 16-bit hero! The game just looks and plays completely out of this world.

Vectorman

The excellent rapid-fire action is so lightening fast, that your thumbs actually become a blur. Thanks to Sega's new play-to-win series, randomly selected *Vectorman* cartridges have a chance to win built right in the game. When a player finishes a winning game cartridge, a screen flashes, "You Win!" and lists the phone number for the top secret winners' line. Winners who call that number have a chance to win over $160,000 in prizes, including a $25,000 Grand Prize and 10 First Prizes of $10,000 or 90 Sega Saturn systems. *Vectorman* is just what the 16-bit Genesis needed, a fantastic game that injects life into a moribund

Men! People who aren't men! Do you measure up?

The TUG & buster Formidable Follicles Contest!

We want to see if you've got what it takes to hang with TUG & buster, the manliest comic book characters this side of the tracks. So send us a photo of you and your hair (preferably in the same shot), where the latter is in its most impressive, massive, turgid, gravity-defyin', babe- or guy-attractin', awe-inspiring state! Beautiful bouffants! Deadly ducktails! Astounding afros! Pompous pompadours! Whatever the style, we want to see it. Go ahead and overmousse, 'cause in this contest, size counts!

We'll narrow the entries down to the 12 biggest and best, and forward them to *TUG & buster* creator and hair-apparent Manly Marc Hempel (He's still got his hair! Honest—all original equipment!), who will determine the final winners of some tough-guy prizes!

GRAND PRIZE (1):

One reader will receive a tough-looking leather jacket with an original Marc Hempel TUG & buster sketch painted on the back and an autographed copy of *TUG & buster* #1. Impress the babes!

RUNNER-UP (1):

One reader will receive this here original art made specifically for this contest and an autographed copy of *TUG & buster* #1!

STILL HAIRIER THAN THE REST (10):

10 readers will receive an autographed copy of *TUG & buster* #1.

This contest is sponsored by Art & Soul Comics, a bunch of hairy guys.

Fill this sucker out, attach it to your photo, put it in an envelope and send it off to: Formidable Follicles Contest, c/o Wizard Press, P.O. Box 118, Congers, NY 10920-0118.
Deadline is February 28, 1996. So start sproutin'!

Hairy Legal Mess

No purchase necessary. Contest is open to anyone except employees of Wizard Press, Art & Soul Comics and their immediate families or, well...bald people, we guess. Print your name, date of birth, address, city, state, zip and telephone number with area code on the official entry form or a 3-by-5-inch index card and attach the form to your photo. Enter as many times as you like. Mail each entry separately to: Formidable Follicles Contest, c/o Wizard Press, P.O. Box 118, Congers, NY 10920-0118. No mechanical reproductions of completed forms are accepted, but you can photocopy the entry form before filling it out if you don't want to mess up your magazine. All entries become property of Wizard Press and none will be returned. All taxes (federal, state and local, if any) will be the responsibility of the prize winners. No cash equivalent or substitute prizes will be offered. Prizes are awarded in the name of the contest winners and are not transferable. Offer void where prohibited, regulated or restricted by law in a manner inconsistent with the purposes and rules hereof. Hey! Keep away from open flames when you've got all that greasy stuff in your hair. We don't need any towering infernos of hair here.

All entries must be received at contest headquarters by February 28, 1996.

Wizard Press is not responsible for lost, late, misdirected or mutilated entries. Odds of winning will be determined by the number of valid entries received prior to the closing date of the contest. Prize winners will be selected based on quality and creativity among all properly completed entries by Wizard Press and Marc Hempel. Judging will take place on March 15, 1996.

For a list of winners, available after March 15, 1996, send a self-addressed stamped envelope to: Formidable Follicles Winners, c/o Wizard Press, P.O. Box 118, Congers, NY 10920-0118.

The TUG & buster Formidable Follicles Contest!

DEADLINE IS FEBRUARY 28, 1996!

Name _____ Date of Birth _____

Address _____

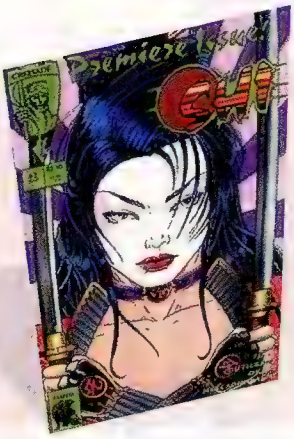
City _____ State _____ Zip _____

Phone Number (with area code) _____ Jacket Size _____

Did you attach your follicle-filled photo?

***Wizard*, by staying in touch with hundreds of retailers throughout the country, keeps a close eye on the country's hottest back issues. Here are December's hottest back issues.**

TOP 10 COMICS



1. SHI #1

Writers: William Tucci and Peter Gutierrez
Artists: William Tucci and Barry Orkin

Wearin' this much makeup isn't really that good for your skin. It clogs your pores and makes you break out to the point where you look like the flip side of a Nestlé Crunch bar. So all you Long Island girls out there: Lay off with the makeup! Give the hairspray a rest too. If we wanted to see clowns, we'd go to the circus. My, we certainly seem to have strayed from the topic this time, leaving only like five words to describe *Shi* #1. Might be tough. We'll give it a shot: underprinted, well-executed, hot as heck.

2. THE X-FILES #1

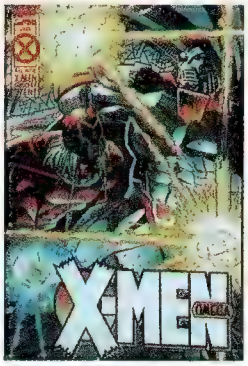
Writer: Stefan Petrucha
Artist: Charles Adlard

We've been making fun of Scully and Mulder for the last couple of months, but don't get us wrong. The show's great and all, but these two FBI agents are, well...incompetent. Hey, HEY! Settle down! Think about it: The only person Scully ever successfully shot was Mulder ("Hey, thanks, partner."), and every time Mulder has the Lost Ark of the Covenant in his hands, he puts it aside "till later" and never does anything with it. These two never resolve anything and leave endless plotlines hanging. (Hey, it's like Chris Claremont was writing the show!) There's no denying the show's popular, though, and the comic series is just as hot.

3. X-MEN OMEGA

Writers: Scott Lobdell and Mark Waid
Artists: Roger Cruz, with inkers LaRosa, Townsend, Kesel, Candelario, Hanna and Milgrom

With the X-Men sooo popular that you can't take a whiz without hitting a mutant-related product, you'd think they'd make the X-titles a little more reader-friendly. We've been readin' these books for the last 15 years, and WE have a tough time figurin' 'em out. Take this "Age of Apocalypse" storyline. While cool and all, it was a tad long and certainly frightening to new readers. In it, an alternate timeline group of X-Men battle to free their world from the tyrannical rule of Apocalypse and return their timeline to normal.



NUMBER THREE

NUMBER FOUR

4. GENERATION X #1

Writer: Scott Lobdell
Artists: Chris Bachalo and Mark Buckingham

Though not as wildly popular as the "core" X-Men books, *Generation X* is actually one of the better-written and more enjoyable Marvel titles. In it, a diverse group of teenage mutants learns to control its powers and try to fit in with everyday life (with the occasional super-powered baddie thrown in to remind you it's a Marvel book). Can't read? Hey, no problem! These cute li'l mutant tykes are gonna be starrin' in what's sure to be a pretty close comic book adaptation in an upcoming made-for-TV movie on Fox. Set your VCRs!

NUMBER FIVE

5. GEN[13] #1 (MINI-SERIES)

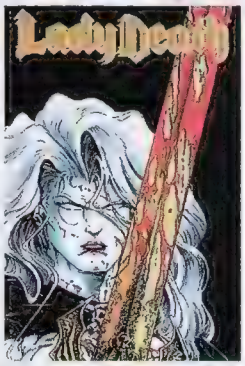
Writers: Jim Lee and Brandon Choi
Artists: J. Scott Campbell and Alex Garner

There's nothing wrong with a woman being a lesbian. For those of you who were moanin' and groanin' about Gen[13]er Rainmaker being a lesbo, give it a rest. Remember how every time you read *X-Men* and get pissed when someone beats on them 'cause they're "dirty muties," i.e. "different"? Prejudice is prejudice, my friend, so you'd be no different from the bigots portrayed in those comics. Whoa, just enough space left to step off this soapbox and explain that *Gen[13]* is a book about five superpowered teens dealing with everyday life, timely social issues and super-baddies. Good stuff.

6. LADY DEATH #1

Writer: Brian Pulido
Artist: Steven Hughes

English chicks aren't this pasty. Dead English chicks aren't this pasty. Which kinda shows you how twisted a fanboy's fantasy world can be. If you were to see a chick this white, it'd be creepy. A seven–foot green gal like She-Hulk? Creepy. A hairy broad with cat eyes like Tigra? Creepy. Want real women? The kind that talk and don't fight crime in a thong? Then be a part of the real world! Don't sit around readin' comics all day! If Lady Death is the keeper of the dead, you'll meet her soon enough. Live life while you're young enough to enjoy it!



NUMBER SIX

NUMBER SEVEN

7. WOLVERINE #1 (SERIES)

Writer: Chris Claremont
Artists: John Buscema and Al Williamson

HEY, retro-*Wizard* at its finest!
SEE an old Marvel in the Top Ten list!
BEHOLD Rob Liefeld in the hot artists chart!
WITNESS fans actually buying Valiant books!
Well, one out of three ain't bad.

NUMBER EIGHT

8. VENGEANCE OF VAMPIRELLA #1

Writer: Tom Sniegoski
Artist: Buzz

When does she have time to shave? C'mon, every issue, she's fightin' some weird monster or something, jumping from place to place tryin' to learn the secrets of her past, skippin' rope in place—it's always something. Her costume is pretty skimpy, and without the proper grooming habits this book could get real nasty real fast. Good thing she's a fictional character. Anyhoo, with vampires being popular and all these days, slap one with 44 DD's and a bathing suit that'd make a Playmate blush and bammo, hot book.

9. ASH #1

Writers: Joe Quesada and Jimmy Palmiotti
Artists: Joe Quesada and Jimmy Palmiotti

That's odd. Here's a relatively new character that doesn't have a ridiculously contrived and forced name. Y'know: Reignfire, Bloodpool, Nightwatch, Heylookatmyrack-lass—the list goes on and on. But Ash sounds pretty cool. Fairly neat book too. Who wouldn't enjoy an action-packed story starring a young New York firefighter who suddenly became a pyrotechnically powered superhero shrouded in tons of mystery and drama? Plus wicked villains and two cute cats!

NUMBER NINE

NUMBER TEN

10. THE X-FILES #2

Writer: Stefan Petrucha
Artist: Charles Adlard

Scully and Mulder? Again? We've got nothing new to talk about. So to fill this space, we're gonna talk about our favorite episode of *Super Friends*. Ever see the one where some aliens came to a lifeless Earth in ruins, and discovered a diary chronicling how Lex Luthor found this really powerful bomb-thing and killed everybody on Earth? Then the aliens go back in time and stop Luthor from doin' the deed. Cool stuff. See you next month.

THE NEXT TEN

THE NEXT 10 HOT BOOKS AND THE COMPANIES THAT MAKE THEM

11. X-MAN #1 MARVEL
12. AVENGELYNE #1 MAXIMUM
13. DAWN #1 SIRIUS
14. PREACHER #1 DC/VERTIGO
15. GEN[13] #1 (REG.) IMAGE
16. WOLVERINE #75 MARVEL
17. SHI #2 CRUSADE
18. LADY DEATH: B.H.A.H. #1 CHAOS!
19. ANGELA #1 IMAGE
20. SPAWN #1 IMAGE

WIZARD

SO MUCH FUN, IT CAN ONLY HAPPEN ONCE A YEAR-

THE 1996 WIZARD PRICE GUIDE ANNUAL!

WIN A FREE X-MEN #1!

(YEAH, THE ONE FROM 1963)

CONTEST ENTRY INSIDE EACH ISSUE

SPIDEY™ COVER

Comics' favorite magazine, **Wizard: The Guide to Comics**, releases one EPIC price guide annual. **Don't Miss It!**

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- Great articles on collecting, grading and pricing comic books!

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COMIC WATCH

BACK ISSUES TO KEEP YOUR EYE ON

Generation X #1

WRITER: **SCOTT LOBDELL**

ARTISTS: **CHRIS BACHALO & MARK BUCKINGHAM**

PUBLISHER: **MARVEL**

RELEASE DATE: **NOVEMBER 1994**

In its Chromium-covered glory, this book is the acclaimed team debut of Generation X—Marvel's "New Mutants for the '90s." Now, before you start tossin' jelly donuts (mmm…donuts) at us and callin' us mutie scum, just settle down a minute! Yeah, several of the Gen X members did first appear in other books—like Synch in *X-Men* (vol. 2) #36 and Jubilee waaay back in *Uncanny X-Men* #244—this is where most of Generation X come together as an actual team, snazzy red costumes and all, under the supervision of that Banshee bloke and the ever-friendly (and always gorgeous) White Queen.

And even after skulking through *Uncanny* #317 and *X-Men* #37, where several of these young mutants joined forces to battle and escape from Harvest (Y'know, them Harvest Crisps crackers are quite tasty!), we pinned down this here *Generation X* issue as the team's true debut, seein' as how it's the first official union of the Gen Xers against one force (Emplate). This already steamin' issue also introduces Chamber, who shoots this bioblast force out of his…chest. How cool is that? Plus, the mysterious Penance (whose razor-sharp touch could mean instant death) shows up. So this book's got a monstrous amount of collector catchability under its colorful belt, especially since the team's first year has been damn exciting! W

GOOD & CHEAP

GOOD READIN' BACK ISSUES YOU CAN BUY FOR PEANUTS!

DC Comics Presents #59

WRITERS: **KEITH GIFFEN WITH PAUL LEVITZ**

ARTISTS: **KEITH GIFFEN & KURT SCHAFFENBERGER**

CURRENT VALUE: **$1.25**

Ambush Bug + The Legion of Substitute Heroes = Trouble.

And that's exactly what Superman's in for when a "routine" time-traveling mission becomes a hilarious romp through the future in *DC Comics Presents* #59.

It all starts with Ambush Bug tagging along just as Supes is about to zip off into the 30th century. With yet another disaster to prevent, Superman—against his better judgment—is forced to leave Ambush Bug with the Legion of Substitute Heroes. (Yep, you guessed it: the real Legion isn't home.) In typical Substitute Hero fashion, the teleporting Ambush Bug is left in a high-containment security tank (read: Chlorophyll Kid's aquarium) and escapes. Left to his own clownish devices, Ambush Bug starts a chaotic tear through futuristic Metropolis which culminates in a "hide-and-go-seek" battle within the city's Superman Museum.

With the likes of Infectious Lass, Antennae Lad and Stone Boy trying to corral him, it's no wonder the whole thing turns into a fiasco. And once again, it's up to Supes to save the day with a clever little trap set up to outwit the ever-scheming Ambush Bug. And wait till you see Stone Boy's…heh heh…"tragic" fate! W

PICKS

a listing of the hottest books as selected by the WIZARD staff, shipping in January

X-MEN #50

Writer: Scott Lobdell
Artists: Andy Kubert and Cam Smith
Release Date: January 16
Cover Price: $3.95 (Prismatic foil board cover); $2.95 (Non-enhanced cover)

MARVEL It's been 50 issues already? Geez, it seems like it was just yesterday when Jim Lee drew the multi-edition *X-Men* #1. As this issue begins, Cyclops, Wolverine, Storm and Iceman are plucked from the fabled X-Mansion by Gateway (hmmm...) and brought to a mysterious place.

"[They've] been totally put through the wringer," says scribe Scott Lobdell, who hands over the writing reins to Mark Waid next issue. "And from there, they have to figure out how they got there, who the enemy is and how to defeat him. The issue opens up with Cyclops dangling upside down from a tree in his black silk boxers without his visor. And it only gets worse from there."

The new enemy, whom Lobdell is tentatively calling Post, has some ties to Onslaught, the villain who severely damaged Juggernaut off-panel in *Uncanny X-Men* #322. And just what kind of powers does Post use to make mincemeat of our heroes? What exactly does he do?

"Pretty much everything he needs to do in order to beat the crap out of the X-Men," says Lobdell. "The X-Men traditionally don't have their own Galactus-type villain. And when I say that, Apocalypse, Mr. Sinister and even Magneto to a certain degree are human, whereas this is a character who clearly could mop up the floor with the X-Men."

And Lobdell assures us that Post'll be a thorn in the X-Men's side for some time to come.

"While it's a self-contained story, there will be ramifications that carry over for the next several years," he notes. "Although it's impossible to say now, without revealing anything, I can tell you that it will definitely affect the way the X-Men interact with the rest of the Marvel Universe. And the first inklings of that will be in this issue."

SPAWN/WILDC.A.T.S #1

Writer: Alan Moore
Artists: Scott Clark & Sal Regla
Release Date: January 12
Cover Price: $2.50

IMAGE Another tough pick! All this heavy decision-making makes our collective heads explode! The union of two of the biggest titles in comics, written by one of comics' best writers? This four-part miniseries has just an outside chance of making for one pretty darn interesting tale, we figure.

But what kinda enemy could stand up to the combined might of Jim Lee's Kherubim superheroes and Todd McFarlane's demonic hellspawn? Nothing on this planet right now, that's for sure! Unfortunately, that's not true of the future, where some demonic hellspawn-like creature has found a way to boost his powers, kill the Malebolgia, and take over Earth! Could it be...? Nah, why give away all the secrets already?

Today's Spawn learns of these events when future incarnations of Zealot and Grifter come back in time. Spawn and today's WildC.A.T.s hook up with the remnants of the future 'C.A.T.s to try to save tomorrow for today, or something like that.

"This story represents some of Scott Clark's best work ever," says editor Mike Heisler. "He's been able to take his time and put in a lot of detail. Sal [Regla] too has really come into his own on this, and that's not just hype. I've been honestly surprised at just how great the pages have been looking."

BATMAN: SHADOW OF THE BAT #48

Writer: Alan Grant
Artists: Vince Giarrano & Ray McCarthy
Release Date: January 16
Cover Price: $1.95

DC COMICS Readers who fear crossovers because of the huge investment they entail can rest easy with "Contagion," a new 11-part Batman Family tale, promises editor Dennis O'Neil. "We try to serve our cake so the readers can have it and eat it too," he says. "The common complaint I hear is, 'If I'm a *Robin* fan, why do you insist I buy these other comics too?' So we try to ensure that each story is self-contained, but each part also adds to the broad mosaic of the bigger tale."

The story begins here and winds through *B:SOTB*, *Batman*, *Detective*, *The Batman Chronicles*, *Robin*, *Azrael* and *Catwoman* over the next two months. It's steeped in detective work, as a deadly plague becomes a weapon of terror for rogue members of Azrael's Order of St. Dumas. The heroes—and several other forces—must hunt down three survivors of the plague's outbreak, learn how they resisted it, and use that knowledge to save Gotham City.

In addition to the title stars, Nightwing and the Huntress join the battle—but then, so do Poison Ivy, who plays a major role, and the Penguin. And whose side is Catwoman on, anyway? "Catwoman's a veritable co-star of *Azrael* #16," O'Neil says. She'll also show up in *Robin*. But is she fighting with the guys or against them?

THE SANDMAN #75

Writer: Neil Gaiman
Artist: Charles Vess
Release Date: January 23
Cover Price: $3.95

DC COMICS The time has come: Neil Gaiman's masterpiece reaches an end with this issue. After seven years at the helm, Gaiman rings down the curtain with "The Tempest," which will look into the mind of William Shakespeare as he writes that play, his last complete one. Artist Charles Vess says, "The finality with which the play ends will be echoed in the story. There will be a definite sense of closure. I don't think you'll see this incarnation of the Sandman again."

The story combines depictions of Shakespeare's creative process, which will be fully painted, with panels showing the play's action, executed in traditional line art. "Except I'm drawing it," Vess laughs. "So it will have billions of little lines in it."

The last time Gaiman and Vess worked together, in issue #19's "A Midsummer Night's Dream," they won a World Fantasy award, the first for a comic book story. That won't happen again, since the next day the World Fantasy board changed its rules to prohibit comics from winning. That won't deter the team's efforts, Vess notes. "While we were standing up there grinning like fools and getting photographed, we leaned toward each other and said, 'Puts a little pressure on us, doesn't it?' "

Other Sandman projects being readied include a new four-part *Death* mini-series by Gaiman and artist Chris Bachalo, and an ongoing *The Dreaming* series by other creators. So the dream lives on...

ASH #0

Writers: Joe Quesada & Jimmy Palmiotti
Artists: Joe Quesada & Jimmy Palmiotti
Release Date: January 30
Cover Price: $3.50

EVENT COMICS "*Ash* #0 will show everyone that Ash's powers are not what they think they are," says creator Joe Quesada. "Everyone believes his powers are spiritual, but in fact they're mechanical and science fiction-based." This tale will show how Ashley Quinn came to receive his powers while fighting a deadly inferno, Quesada promises. "We'll show why he went into the building, how he ended up falling five stories, and how he was saved."

In fact, the writer/artist reveals, Ash was rescued by something from the future. That twist opens new dimensions—literally. "Ash actually exists on two planes of existence, one here and one in the future," Quesada elaborates. "But it's not a future that is preordained, and Ash is the linchpin." That gives him the opportunity to affect the path of future events while also existing in the present.

"This is the one book that no past *Ash* reader should be without," says Quesada, putting on his sales hat. "It's also a perfect launching point for new readers, as we explain what's happened and open new directions." To inaugurate the new Future Ash, the issue will feature two evenly distributed covers, each showing one version of the character. "It's going to be a pretty bizarre #0 issue," he says. "Hopefully, it'll open eyes to what Ash really is about."

—Picks written by Craig Shutt

MORE PICKS

The following pages list the peachiest titles shipping in January, as selected and written by the *Wizard* staff.

AQUAMAN #18

DC COMICS At last! The origin of superbabe Dolphin is revealed! It seems that Ms. Phin is on trial for a whole bunch o' crimes against these underwater folks who've made Aquaman their king. And, just like all good monarchies, the queen's out to get rid of Dolphin for good! Some fishy stuff by Peter "Mackerel" David, Marty "Minnow" Egeland and Howard "Bass" Shum. **$1.75**

ASTRO CITY #6

IMAGE That swell guy Samaritan's back, and he and Winged Victory (Mwrrrroww!) head out to paint the town red. You'll get some keen insight into both of the heroes' pasts, including their origins. Wonder if they'll hit the local Taco Bell for dinner and dancing, then cap the evening with box seats at the tractor pull. That's how we treat our women. Well, back when we had girlfriends. By Kurt Busiek and Brent Anderson. **$2.25**

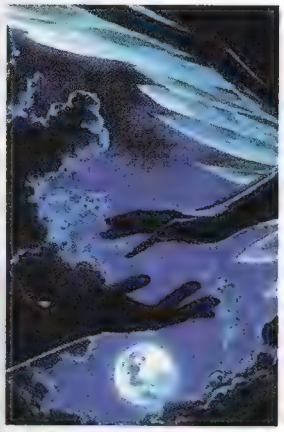
BATMAN AND ROBIN ADVENTURES #5

DC COMICS Riddle me this: What happens when a Gotham news reporter (read: boob) proclaims the Riddler as Gotham's cleverest villain? Well, besides probably bein' fired for running such an unethical piece, you better believe the Joker jumps in to show everyone who's really tops. So it's up to Batman to stop Joker and Riddler from tearing each other (and Gotham!) apart. By Ty Templeton and Rick Burchett. **$1.75**

CAPTAIN AMERICA #449

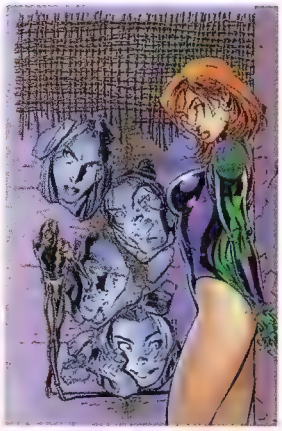
MARVEL COMICS "The First Sign," Part 1 (of 4). Looks like the ol' Living Legend is now back with the Avengers. (And so's Iron Man and Thor! Go, Marvel! You're on the right track!) Unfortunately, none of the Avengers seem to be around when that nasty guy Zodiac starts wreaking havoc in Manhattan by stealin' all the city's power. Looks like a job for a certain star-spangled Avenger... By Mark Waid, Ron Garney and Denis Rodier. **$1.50**

AQUAMAN #18



ASTRO CITY #6

DAREDEVIL #350



GEN13 #8

DAREDEVIL #350

MARVEL COMICS Happy Anniversary, DD! This big ol' ish sees Daredevil haunted by some ghosts of the past as he tangles with a challenge in the present. Plus, besides our getting an eyeful of Stick, the Chaste and Foggy Nelson (Yay! Foggy's in the Avengers too!), the good ol' original red costume is back! Looks like Daredevil could finally be born again, again. By J.M. DeMatteis, Ron Wagner and Bill Reinhold. **$3.50 (ENHANCED COVER); $2.95 (REGULAR EDITION)**

EVIL ERNIE: STRAIGHT TO HELL #4 (OF 5)

CHAOS! COMICS It's a real meeting of the minds, as Ernie gathers all of the smartest scientists in the world to find a way of bringing Lady Death back to Earth. But y'know, there's still that whole problematic prophecy thingie saying that Ms. Death can't return to Earth until everyone's dead. By Brian Pulido, Justin Justiniano and Jason Jensen. **$2.95**

FLASH #111

DC COMICS "Dead Heat," Part 6 (of 6). Oh, Betty! This is it, speed freaks. The shockin' conclusion to the whole enchilada! Now that Flash has witnessed the deadly acts that Savitar's willing to commit, he's got to race 'round the world and stop Savitar from killing anyone else. But will Wally's speed be up to snuff? By Mark Waid, Oscar Jimenez and Jose Marzan Jr. **$1.75**

GEN13 #8

IMAGE Now that Lynch's been safely recovered, the gang hangs out in the funky town o' San Francisco—but problems still follow 'em. Besides feeding the Sea Lions down at Pier 39 and beating up mimes on the Wharf, that weasel Trance uses his sneaky tactics to seduce Fairchild and Freefall over to his cause. By Brandon Choi, J. Scott Campbell and Alex Garner. **$2.50**

GREEN LANTERN #72

DC COMICS "Hero Quest," Part 2 (of 3). Holy Moley! That Big Red Cheese of a superhero, Captain Marvel, joins up with Green Lantern in Fawcett City to stop a resurrected Egyptian god who controls all sorts of nasty magical lightning. By Ron Marz, Paul Pelletier and Romeo Tanghal. **$1.75**

MORE PICKS

HELLBOY: THE CORPSE AND THE IRON SHOES

LEGEND/DARK HORSE This funky one-shot sees Hellboy try to give Tam O'Clannie a Christian burial, but all sorts of goblins, monsters and just plain evilness keep getting in the way. If that ain't bad, Hellboy's also gotta help out the Monaghans, whose baby was stolen by fairies. Sheesh, what a day. By Mike Mignola, Matt Hollingsworth and James Sinclair. **$2.95**

ICON #35

MILESTONE/DC Looks like that bastard Icon might just do it again. He decides whether or not to return to Earth or his homeworld, Terminus. What did Rocket ever see in that guy, anyway? By Dwayne McDuffie, M.D. Bright and Romeo Tanghal. **$2.50**

IMPULSE #12

DC COMICS *"You can dance if you want to, you can leave your cares behind, but your friends don't dance, and if they don't dance, then they're no friends of mine."* Boogie on down to this month's issue o' *Impulse*, where the little guy attends his first school dance. Also, Bart's cute cousin XS gets ready to return to the Legionnaires in the 30th century. By Mark Waid, Humberto Ramos and Wayne Faucher. **$1.75**

INCREDIBLE HULK #439

MARVEL COMICS "Ghosts of the Future," Part 4 of 5. What the hell is going on here? The world is on the brink of war (No, Matthew Broderick had NOTHING to do with it *this* time...), and the only person who can keep the peace is that big galoot Maestro. But the Hulk *is* Maestro, kind of. And Maestro died in *Future Imperfect*. Ow. Head hurt. Need Oreos. By Peter David, Angel Medina and Robin Riggs. **$1.95**

MAGGIE THE CAT #1

IMAGE The Cat is back! Sable's ol' female "friend" gets her own ongoing series. The sexy jewel thief is caught by the British government, however, and is teamed up with adventurer Ryan James. The two of them must save the world before killing each other.

HELLBOY: THE CORPSE AND THE IRON SHOES

MAGGIE THE CAT #1

MARVEL VERSUS DC #2

OH MY GODDESS! SPECIAL: SYMPATHY FOR THE DEVIL

And you just know that Sable's gotta be close behind! By Mike Grell and Brian Snoddy. **$2.50**

MARVEL VERSUS DC #2

MARVEL COMICS The second part of this awesome crossover features three key "preliminary" bouts: Quicksilver vs. Flash, Sub-Mariner vs. Aquaman, and Thor vs. DC's Captain Marvel. It also prepares you drooling readers for next issue's all-out slugfest. And remember, vote Cap! (Hey, he even takes on Bane this issue!) By Peter David, Dan Jurgens, Paul Neary, Claudio Castellini and Josef Rubinstein. David says, "Any fan who can turn away from this comic is certainly made of sterner stuff than I. I'd pick this up even if I weren't reading comics now, let alone writing them." **$3.95**

OH MY GODDESS! SPECIAL: SYMPATHY FOR THE DEVIL

DARK HORSE COMICS Keith Richards and the rest o' the Rolling Stones guest-star in this special, as they take down that evil Satan character using backward messages, long hair and gallons of cigarettes. Actually, Megumi (your average teenager) gets more than she asked for when her pal Mara (who happens to be a Goddess) transforms her into a car! It's plenty of slapstick comedy by Kosuke Fujishima. **$2.95**

PITT #10

FULL BLEED STUDIOS Uh oh. Looks like Timmy's latent powers are starting to surface. Now it's up to that big galoot Pitt to give that spunky eight-year-old the proper guidance he needs. But you know how kids are... By Dale Keown. **$1.95**

THE POWER OF SHAZAM! #13

DC COMICS Put your Cheese Whiz away and grab on to the cheesiest (but coolest!) comic on the planet. What an issue! Captain Marvel and Cap'n Marvel Jr. have an all-out slugfest to determine who should wield the power of Shazam. And poor Mary's stuck smack in the middle of it all. Plus, some new enemy *worms* his way into Fawcett City. (Yes! It's about friggin' time!!) By Jerry Ordway, Peter Krause and Mike Manley. **$1.75**

MORE PICKS

PREACHER #12

VERTIGO/DC It's the horrific conclusion to "All in the Family." With absolutely nothing to lose, Jesse attempts to take out his disgusting, grotesque grandmother and her henchmen. Y'know, even though this is like one of the most horrifyingly disgusting books ever, it's also one of the best (and funniest!). Give it a try. By Garth Ennis and Steve Dillon. You better believe this puppy's for you mature reader types. **$2.50**

ROBIN #26-#27

DC COMICS Following a fatal shooting, Tim's high school is in utter turmoil, and it's up to Robin and the Spoiler to stop some opposing gangs before complete warfare is waged. And be sure to check out *Robin* #27, also shipping this month, which contains part 3 of the Gotham-shaking "Contagion" crossover. By Chuck Dixon, Mike Wieringo and Stan Woch. **$1.95 EACH**

SANDMAN MYSTERY THEATRE #36

VERTIGO/DC "The Python," Part 4 (of 4). While Dian and Carol are off on a fitness retreat, Burke and the Python go at it in a no-holds-barred battle. And while all that's goin' on, that chubby Sandman guy, who happens to be wounded, manages to get a confession out of that strangler chap. By Matt Wagner, Steven Seagle and Warren Pleece. This one's also for you mature readers. **$2.25**

SPAWN #42-#43

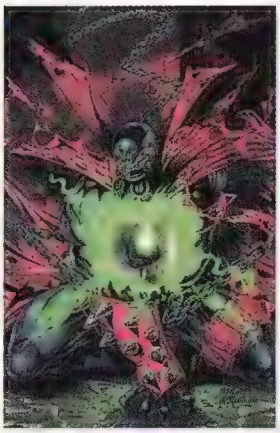
IMAGE The first half of this month gives you more of that APE-X character, including its link to Spawn! You can see Al Simmons before he even became Spawn. Then two weeks later, issue #43 deals with the surprising death of a recurring character. 10 bucks says it's not Spawn. By Todd McFarlane, Tony Daniel, Kevin Conrad and Greg Capullo. **$1.95 EACH**

THE SPECTRE #39

DC COMICS Things ain't good over in Spectre Land. Seems the life of some guy named Nicodemus Hazzard (He's the founder of Hazzard County, y'know?) and America's future are in jeopardy as the mighty Spectre takes on the being known as Shadrach. The bad news, though, is that even if Spectie beats ol' Shadrach, the National Interest could still get its grubby li'l paws on the American Talisman. By John Ostrander and Tom Mandrake. **$2.25**

PITT #10

THE POWER OF SHAZAM! #13


SPAWN #42

THE SPECTRE #39

SPIDER-MAN BOOKS

MARVEL Get ready, kiddies. Clear away those cobwebs and gear up for a new Spidey tale that'll change everything you know about the wall-crawler. *Sensational Spider-Man* #2 features Part 2 of "The Return of Kaine." Someone's found a skeleton at the bottom of some rubble, and it just might be Spidey's! Plus, Kaine joins the Great Game, and his sights are set on a Spidey that's currently out there. For Part 3, check out *Amazing Spider-Man* #409, where Kaine can win a chance at bein' a normal human, and all he's gotta do is off Spider-Man. The excitin' conclusion is waitin' for you in *Spider-Man* #66, where Kaine and Spidey go at it once and for all! After that rocky tale, grab a hold of *Spectacular Spider-Man* #232, in which Spidey's new love interest might be a huge threat to his whole secret identity schtick. Also, *Spider-Man Team-Up* #2 sees Spidey and the Silver Surfer join forces to take on the Mad Thinker and Quasimodo. And be double-damn sure to get *Untold Tales of Spider-Man* #7, hands down the best Spider-Man...heck, the best Marvel book on the market! This ish: J. Jonah Jameson offers $20,000 for the secret identity of Spider-Man (Shhh! Don't tell anyone who he is!). And a certain Peter Parker in need of cash just may have to spill the beans. **$1.95 EACH; $1.50—*AMAZING, SPECTACULAR*; $2.95—*SPIDER-MAN TEAM-UP*; 99 CENTS—*UNTOLD TALES***

STRANGERS IN PARADISE #9

ABSTRACT STUDIOS Well, following that horrific ordeal from the last few issues, Katchoo is now doing fine. In fact, she's actually happy! But (you knew there'd be a but) that David fella seems to be on the outs with the girls. And even worse, that scumbag Freddie (who's going to marry some bimbo soon) decides that Francine's the woman for him. Awesome storytelling and art by Terry Moore. **$2.75**

MORE PICKS

STRAY BULLETS #8

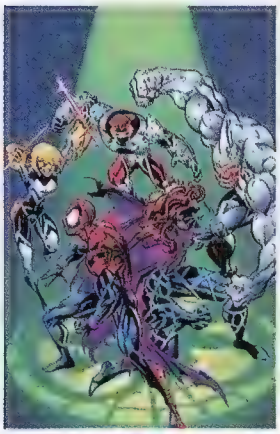
EL CAPITÁN Another awesome series out there in Comic Book Land. This issue sees Beth and Orson start a wonderful romance and embark on a wacky journey to some bizarre places. By David Lapham. Yep, this one's suggested for you mature types. **$2.95**

SUPERBOY #25

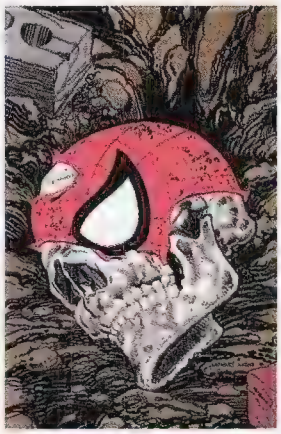
DC COMICS "Losin' It," Part 1 (of 6). Hey, we finally get to learn Knockout's origin! But if that ain't excitin' enough for ya, those Female Furies from Apokolips launch an assault which causes Superboy and Knockout's partnership to hit an all-new level. By Karl Kesel, Tom Grummett and Doug Hazlewood. **$2.95**

SUPERMAN BOOKS

DC COMICS Guest stars! Getcher guest stars here! Yep, you guessed it, it's Guest Star Month over here in Superman Land. Gosh, just like those cool *DC Comics Presents* days of old. Sigh. The fun starts in *Action Comics* #719, with the Dark Knight himself! Superman heads to Gotham City to find the antidote to a poison that's killing Lois! And the guy who's got it? Well, that would be the Joker. Then over in *Superman: The Man of Steel* #54, that fun-lovin' Spirit of Vengeance, the Spectre, pops up to help solve the mystery of all those ghost-sightings at the Daily Planet offices. When you're done bustin' ghosts, pick up *Superman* #110 for the return of...Yeah, baby!...Plastic Man!!! The stretchiest superhero around joins Supes for a pretty wacky adventure. (Oh! Wouldn't it be awesome if Hula Hula shows up too?) Also, snoopy Lois uncovers some more dirt on Clark and Lori Lemaris' previous relationship. Then getcher running shoes on and race over to *Adventures of Superman* #533, where the Man of Steel and Impulse find themselves caught in the middle of a worldwide scavenger hunt. Unfortunately, it's gonna take a lot more than just simple speed to win this one! And the final guest of the month is none other than Captain Marvel, who joins Supes in *Superman: The Man of Tomorrow* #4. The two of them (and that old wizard Shaza...oh, you almost made me say it!) go up against Satanus. Oh well, guess Ambush Bug'll have to wait till next year to start popping up again in Superman's books. **$1.95 EACH**



AMAZING SPIDER-MAN #409



SENSATIONAL SPIDER-MAN #2

SUPERBOY #25

TEAM 7 III: DEAD RECKONING #1

TEAM 7 III: DEAD RECKONING #1 (OF 4)

IMAGE This new Team 7 mini-series details the events behind the team's eventual breakdown, and how they each became your favorite heroes of today. Plus, this ish takes you right into Team 7's final mission, which includes Lynch losing an eye! By Chuck Dixon and Jason Johnson. Dixon says, "A running theme throughout the mini-series is the Leningrad mission, which anyone familiar with WildStorm continuity is familiar with. We also feature, in issue #1, a kind of proto-origin for Grifter's mask. We'll [find out] a little bit of the story, and we'll know more of it by the end of the mini-series. It's the beginning of the end for Team 7. This mini-series shows how we tie the old continuity in with the new continuity. This is the bridging series between the two." **$2.50**

THOR #496

MARVEL COMICS "The First Sign," Part 2 (of 4). Hey, Thor, guess who's coming to dinner? Captain America and like 65 million Zodiac Agents. But Thor's pretty useless these days without his powers, so it looks like Cap's gotta take 'em all by his lonesome. (But seeing as how Cap will kick Batman's ass next month in the *DC vs. Marvel* crossover, he should have no problem moppin' the floor with some Zodiac bums.) This tale continues in *Iron Man* #326 and concludes in *Avengers* #396. By William Messner-Loebs and Mike Deodato Jr. **$1.50**

TOMOE #0 (OF 3)

CRUSADE ENTERTAINMENT Shi's big sister gets her own mini-series, which runs parallel to Shi's regular series! This issue details everything that led up to Arashi's hiring of Tomoe's forces and leads right into *Shi* #6. The rest of this series, which takes place after *Shi* #6, will explore the life of Tomoe and give you even more insight into this ultimate killing machine! By Bill Tucci, Dan Mishkin, Amanda Conner and Jimmy Palmiotti. Tucci says, "It's the dawn of a new character in the Crusade Universe. The series summarizes the rise of Tomoe, who will drastically affect the Shi Universe from the onset of this mini-series. You find out about her background and how she became the leader of the Nara 6, a hit squad that's been sent to New York City

MORE PICKS

in search of the Shi killer. It's gonna change life for Ana Ishikawa in a way that's much more dramatic than you might think. The book looks great." **$2.50**

TUG & BUSTER #2

ART AND SOUL COMICS It's another hair-raising (Groaaan!) tale of friendship and mayhem as Tug sets out to get himself a haircut. Gee, sounds kinda scary, don't it? By Marc Hempel. **$2.95**

UNCANNY X-MEN #330

MARVEL COMICS Psylocke's in deep trouble, and there's only one man who can save her! Can Wolverine and her main squeeze Archangel find her mystery man? By Scott Lobdell and Joe Madureira. **$1.95**

WILDC.A.T.S #26

IMAGE That nutty android Spartan tries to figure out just what the heck's tearing his team apart up on the planet Khera, but he better be careful, 'cause you know what happens to nosy androids... Also, back on Earth, a bunch o' disgruntled villains get together to discuss the problem of Majestic and his team o' heroes. By Alan Moore, Travis Charest and Troy Hubbs. **$2.50**

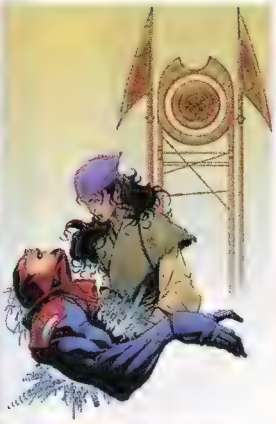
WONDER WOMAN #107

DC COMICS Under the spell of Morgaine Le Fey (never trust a woman whose middle name is Le), Etrigan the Demon heads to Gateway City to get a hold of Wonder Woman. But a certain Phantom Stranger and Arion the Immortal (Arion? *Arion?!?* Where the heck has *he* been?) show up to give ol' Wondie a hand. By John Byrne. **$1.95**

THE X-FILES #14

TOPPS COMICS A brand-new computer game is apparently turning innocent li'l game players into psychotic killin' machines without its users even realizing it! (We always knew *Pac-Man* was a tool of Satan!) Agent Mulder gets in touch with the game (which has successfully developed its own awareness), but he may not be able to stop it from continuing to spread death. By Stefan Petrucha and Charles Adlard. **$2.95**

UNCANNY X-MEN #330



WILDC.A.T.S #26

WONDER WOMAN #107

X-O MANOWAR #63

X-O MANOWAR #63-#64

ACCLAIM COMICS Aric faces his biggest challenge yet, when he goes up against the nastiest villain of his life: Master Darque! This fight's so big it spans two full issues. By Keith Giffen, Bart Sears, Andy Smith and Ray Kryssing. **$2.50 EACH** W

WHAT I'M READING

name: **Ron Marz**

occupation: **Writer of DC's *Green Lantern* and two issues of the four-part *DC vs. Marvel* mini-series.**

currently reads:

"Truthfully, I don't keep up with that many monthlies. I faithfully read *Starman*, *Flash* and *Captain America* now. I think what Alan Moore is doing on *WildC.A.T.s* is a lot of fun. And I try to keep up with the Batman and Superman families.

"I think *Starman* is the most interesting monthly book out there, both in the writing and visually. It's something different than anything else out there on the stands. I also read stuff like *Hellboy* and *Sin City* because they're a bit different

BY DAN ALBAUGH

GIVING THE EDGE TO RAZOR

London Night Studios, Brian Pulido of Chaos! Comics and Krome Productions have joined forces to produce Razor Chromium Trading Cards. Razor, the dark mistress of vengeance, ranks near the forefront of all the Bad Girls in comics.

The 90-card set will feature the artwork of some of the biggest names in the business including Jim Balent, Mike Deodato Jr., Everette Hartsoe, Steven Hughes, Georges Jeanty, Jae Lee, Kirk Lindo, Joseph Linsner, David Mack, Jude Millien, Dark One, Richard Pollard and Steven Sandoval. Serving as art director is Brian Pulido, creator and publisher of *Evil Ernie* and *Lady Death*. Highlighting the set will be never-before-seen artwork and the first appearance of several new *Razor* characters.

Randomly inserted in packs will be 500 Everette Hartsoe signature cards, three fully painted super chase cards and five HoloChrome cards by Balent, Hughes, Lee, Linsner and Millien. The set is slated for a February 1996 release and will be issued in seven-card packs, 32 packs in a box.

Promotional support for the Razor Chromium set will start with *Razor: Torture* #0 where one of three cards will be inserted. Exclusive inserts will also appear in *Wizard*'s Bad Girl Special.

•Krome will also issue a 90-card Betty Boop Chromium set. Included will be a three-card black-and-white Chromium chase set and a six-card Nostalgia-Chrome bonus set.

That irreverent feline, Garfield, will also be the star of a set of 90 UV-coated cards from Krome. Serving as special inserts will be a nine-card Chromium chase set.

Both sets will be released in eight-card packs, 36 packs to a box. A special collector's binder will be made available for each set. Look for *Betty Boop* and *Garfield* on store shelves by February 1996.

FLEER/SKYBOX

The Joker's escaped and the Dark Knight is nowhere to be found. All the evidence shows that Batman's been killed and the Joker's the leading suspect. However, the Joker claims innocence and joins Robin and Nightwing to help solve the mystery behind Batman's apparent murder. This is the storyline of the 90-card *Batman Master Series* to be released by Fleer/SkyBox in January 1996.

Each card in the set will feature extra-thick 20-point card stock, foil stamping and UV coating on both sides. In addition, each of the 90 cards will be issued in a gold-foil signature Artist's Proofs version. Cards in the 24-point stock parallel set will be inserted one per pack. Featured artists include Carl Critchlow, Dave Dorman, Duncan Fegredo, Scott Hampton, Ken Kelly, Dermot Power and James Warhola.

The most interesting chase set will be a 10-card Master Villains set. The card backs give Batman's greatest enemies the opportunity to describe in detail how they would most like to cause the Dark Knight's demise. Cards are inserted approximately one to a pack.

Additional bonus cards include a six-card Batman Fantasy Spectra-Etch set and a two-card Batman Chromium set. The Chromium inserts will be issued in a super-rare ClearChrome version, inserted at a one-in-every-99-packs ratio.

Packs of the *Batman Master Series* will have a suggested retail price of $2.99.

•Fleer/SkyBox will also be introducing a DC Universe set in February, similar to the *Marvel Universe* set. *Marvel Impact*, an entry level *Marvel Universe* set, is slated for March.

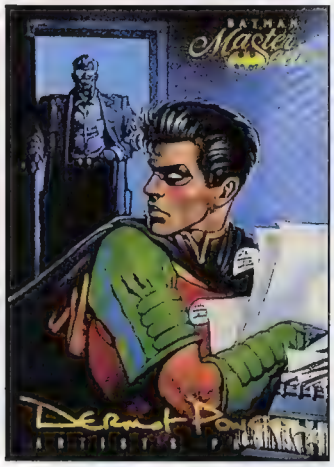
•Also in the works are a Star Trek game coming in June. Check *Wizard* for details in the coming months.

DUOCARDS

DuoCards of North Shirley, N.Y., has entered the collectible trading card market with a couple of significant firsts. The company's new 90-card *Gone With the Wind* set is the first to be produced under license by Turner Broadcasting Systems. The set is expected to be released by January 1996.

Complete your Bad Girl card collection with the *Razor* set by Krome Productions.

"To infinity and bey...oh, damn. That's not our line." Krome's *Betty Boop* set.



"Uh, I was just...uh... looking for a...uh...good Matzoh Ball Soup recipe." SkyBox's *Batman Master Series*.

Gone With the Wind showcases brilliant stills from the classic film and also includes cards showing behind-the-scenes footage and rare candid shots of the famous cast: Clark Gable as Rhett Butler, Vivien Leigh as Scarlett O'Hara and Leslie Howard as Ashley Wilkes. The story of Rhett, Scarlett and the Civil War in the South is recounted on the card backs.

The good stuff continues with the hobby's first-ever Talking Card. By activating a voice chip within the insert card, the voice of Rhett utters the unforgettable line to Scarlett, "Frankly, my dear, I don't give a damn!" A redemption card entitling its owner to a Talking Card will be inserted in one of every 216 packs. What will hobby dealers be selling the Talking Card for? Anticipate a $50-75 price tag.

The suggested retail price for the eight-card packs is $1.29.

CARDZ

Cardz is helping Fred, Barney, Wilma and the rest of the Bedrock gang celebrate a very special anniversary. It was 35 years ago that "The Flintstones" made its debut as the first animated sitcom to run on prime time television. The 110-card set is due to be released in February 1995.

TOPPS

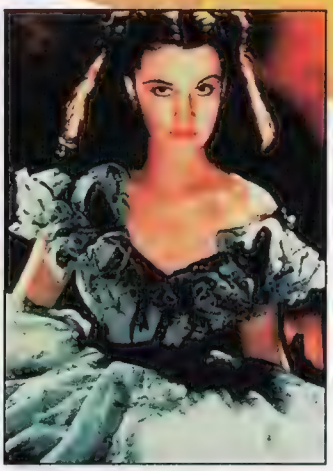
The X-Files card set followed on the heels of the successful comic book series of the same name and proved to be one of the more popular Topps releases in recent years. For two consecutive months, hobby dealers contributing to *Wizard*'s card survey ranked the set #1 on the Top Ten Hottest Sets chart. "*The X-Files* set was somewhat unique," said John Connor of Paul & Judy's Coins & Cards in Arthur, Ill. "It attracted two types of collectors—those who collect cards of their favorite comic book heroes and those who simply liked the TV program."

For an encore, Topps will release a second series of *X-Files* in early 1996. *X-Files Series 2* will consist of 72 cards based, once again, on episodes from the popular television series. Chase cards will include a four-card Topps Finest set and a six-card hologram set. In addition, each card in the set will be produced in a foil-stamped version. The nine-card packs will have a suggested retail price of $1.49.

•Topps will conclude its highly popular *Stars Wars Widevision* trilogy with the January release of the third series, *Return of the Jedi*. This series will consist of 144 cards, all in the wide 2 1/2-inch-by-4 3/4-inch format. Key movie scenes captured by the set include Han's heroic rescue, the battle with Jabba the Hutt, the death of Yoda and the epic Death Star climax. Inserts include a ten-card Topps Finest set, a six-card mini-poster set and a redemption card for a special Star Wars 3-D card.

The nine-card packs will have a suggested shelf price of $1.99. The *Return of the Jedi Widevision* set should be available by January 1996. W

Dan Albaugh enjoys playing with small pieces of cardboard. Oh, yes he does.



"Frankly, Rhett, I don't give a rat's ass that you don't give a damn!" *Gone With the Wind* by Topps.

InQuest presents

HIT THE DECK

The latest in collectible card game news

• Emmitt Smith. Deion Sanders. Ken Griffey Jr. Sports games are the latest craze in the CCG market. As of November, Donruss and NXT Games have teamed up to produce ***Red Zone***, a football card game licensed by the National Football League, and ***Top of the Order***, a baseball card game licensed by Major League Baseball. The cards are very sharp—each displays the player's photo and game information based on the player's actual stats. Now if only they'd come out with a hockey version.

One of the greatest players in football, the 49ers' Steve Young, has one of the best powers in Donruss' new football CCG, *Red Zone*.

• Gearing up for the Christmas season, companies have pulled out the stops to get their products out there. This year the two most promising games of the bunch are, without a doubt, I.C.E.'s ***Middle-earth: The Wizards*** and Decipher's ***Star Wars***. *Middle-earth* was scheduled to hit the stands by mid-December—and boy does it look promising, fantastic-looking cards!—while *Star Wars*' delivery is looking a bit iffy. *Rage*'s ***Wyrm*** and *Over-Power*'s ***PowerSurge*** are among the most promising of expansion sets for the holiday season.

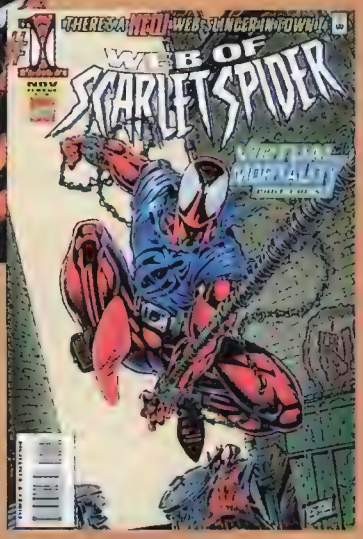
• A few games slipping in before the Christmas rush are Stone Ring Games' ***Quest for the Grail*** and Medallion Simulations' ***RuinsWorld***. If you want to play King Arthur, wield Excalibur, meet the Lady of the Lake, command the Siege Perilous, slay dragons and rescue maidens—oh yeah, and in your spare time, pick up the holy grail—*Quest for the Grail* is the game for you. *RuinsWorld* is also distinctly different from the run-of-the-mill CCGs—combining role-playing and CCGs, the game plays from a single deck with players working together to beat common foes or venturing off alone on secret adventures. Also, look for the re-release of Wizards of the Coast's *Jyhad*, now entitled ***Vampire: The Eternal Struggle***. It's an excellent adaptation of White Wolf's classic *Vampire: The Masquerade* roleplaying game.

• Finally, where the heck did the ***Mortal Kombat Kard*** game come from? This game rocketed out of nowhere. It sounds decent, as all your favorite martial artists—Rayden, Baraka, Scorpion—duke it out, each with their unique special moves. Legendary comic artist Neil Adams heads the team providing original art for the game. I only hope the designers playtested the thing. ■ *Michael Searle*

Michael Searle is the editor of Wizard's sister mag InQuest, the all-around grooviest guide to collectible card games.

X-FILES STILL HOT

Boy, how many different ways can we say *X-Files* is hot? Retailers tell us that demand is as strong as ever for anything to do with the popular Fox TV show including T-shirts, mugs, magazines and, of course, comic books. But the first sign of trouble in paradise may have appeared: A few retailers told us this month that the second printings of issues #1, #2 and #3 have put the brakes on demand for the high-priced original printings. Sure, the demand is still there from the completists (i.e. those guys for whom nothing but an original will do), but the fans who just wanted a copy—*any* copy—to read were happy to buy a second printing and save the $40-$50 to use for other cool X-Files stuff. By the way, the second printings look just like the first printings except you can find the words "second printing" down in the indicia (that tiny print at the bottom edge of the inside front cover). The second printings also have the words "Special Numbered Edition" on the front cover.



Anything and everything X-Files (above) is hot, while the truly confusing Scarlet Spider books (right) are not!

DC/MARVEL CROSSOVER SPARKS EXCITEMENT

With the first issue of the mini-series out by now, retailers were telling us at the time of this writing that this is one of the most-anticipated events in recent memory.

Even the $3.95 cover price hasn't seemed to dampen the enthusiasm. Rich Conley at Heroes and Fantasies in San Antonio, Texas, explained that the 48 pages of story more than offsets the high cover price, plus the fact that fans get to vote on the outcome of the big battles! (Hey, for more info on the crossover see page 48.) Don't be surprised if the first issue is an instant sellout. If that happens, prices could move up rapidly.

by Jon Warren

BLACK SEPTEMBER HAS HEAT

Malibu is on to something. The Infinity one-shot issues, which wrapped up the old storylines and relaunched new series, are finding a growing crowd of fans. The variant cover issues of the one-shots (identified by the artwork covers, as opposed to the solid black covers) have been snapped up by collectors and retailers who are trying to restock. (You know what that means.) The leader of the pack is *Exiles*, most likely due to its higher profile X-Men connection through Exile member Juggernaut, but *Prime* is a close second. Also, look for all the variant covers of the first issues in the new Ultraverse line to start heating up too. These are the ones that have the full-color artwork rather than the standard black-and-white line art covers. According to retailers we spoke to, these books have revived interest in the entire Ultraverse line.

SCARLET SPIDER: BIG OR BUST?

We're getting mixed reviews on this whole Scarlet Spider mess. One thing's for sure, at this point *none* of the Scarlet Spider titles which replaced the regular Spider-Man titles for two months (four for *Web of Spider-Man*) recently are hot; some retailers have gone as far as to say they're a bust. According to them, readers are confused. That's not good. Bruno Andreacchi at B. A.'s Comics & Nostalgia in London, Ontario said that the clone storyline was confusing enough, but the Scarlet Spider storylines have added even another layer of confusion. When fans are confused, prices certainly don't go up because demand is low. Maybe we'll wake up and find out none of this ever really happened. Sheesh…

WHAT'S HOT AT A GLANCE

• **Ash**—All issues have been selling well at current price levels. Retailers report that the Connoisseur's Kit, with the Kid Death lithograph polybagged with the book, has been the faster mover.

• **Avengelyne**—Among the top titles

in the "Bad Girl" genre, collectors are snapping up all issues at current guide prices. Among the most sought-after and probably due for price increases in upcoming months are #1B (the holochrome edition) and #3A (variant edition).

• **Azrael**—Demand is strong for this ongoing series at current prices. Look for price increases in upcoming months as retailers look to replenish stock.

• **Babylon 5**—Strong collector interest in this series based on the TV show. Issue #1 moved to $5; #2 to $3.50; #3-#5 to $2.50.

• **Bone**—Collectors are fanatic about Jeff Smith's work with the result that prices for early first printings continue to rise. Retailers report good sales at guide or slightly above. Issue #2 moved up to $125; #3 to $85; #4 to $55; #13 1/2 to $12 and #13 1/2 Gold to $25.

• **Books of Magic**—Issue #1 of the regular series moved up to $6.50 this month; #4, guest starring Death, moved to $5; and #5-#8 moved to $3. Retailers report increased interest in all DC Vertigo series.

• **Chaos Quarterly**—The first issue turned out to be a surprise hit. Apparently, many retailers ordered thinking it was a newsletter magazine. When it turned out to be a comic, everyone snapped it up.

• **Creed**—Trent Kaniuga's original series from Hall of Heroes is hotter than ever now with the new Lightning Comics mini-series feeding the fire. Issue #1 moved up to $25; #2 (scarcer) moved up to $27.

• **The Crow**—Fans of the hit cult film continue to snap up issues of both the Caliber series and the Tundra series, driving prices up for the first time in several months; across-the-board increases in this month's guide.

• **Cry for Dawn**—Super hot! All issues are tough to find and easy to sell. Price increases again this month reflect retailer's

WIZARD'S TOP TEN HOTTEST ARTISTS

Al Ortega

1 **Todd McFarlane**
Spawn

Gabe Peterio

2 **Joe Madureira**
Uncanny X-Men

Al Ortega

3 **Joe Quesada**
Ash

Al Ortega

4 **Jim Lee**
Gen[13] #6-#7

5 **J. Scott Campbell**
Gen[13]

Al Ortega

6 **Frank Miller**
Upcoming: Sin City: That Yellow Bastard

7 **Greg Capullo**
Spawn

Jon Espie

8 **Steven Hughes**
Lady Death

9 **Tom Grummett**
Superboy

10 **Mike Deodato Jr.**
Glory, Avengers

WIZARD'S TOP TEN HOTTEST WRITERS

Al Ortega

1 **Neil Gaiman**
Sandman

Al Ortega

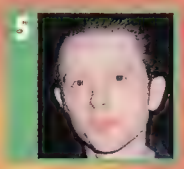
2 **Peter David**
Incredible Hulk, Aquaman, Spider-Man 2099

Al Ortega

3 **Kurt Busiek**
Astro City, Untold Tales of Spider-Man

Bob Martin

4 **Mark Waid**
Captain America, Flash, Impulse, upcoming: X-Men



5 **James Robinson**
Starman

6 **Garth Ennis**
Preacher Upcoming: Hitman

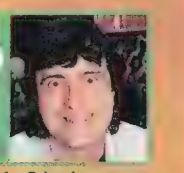
7 **Warren Ellis**
Ruins, UltraForce Upcoming: StormWatch

J. Schuyler

8 **Scott Lobdell**
Generation X, Uncanny X-Men

Bob Martin

9 **Alan Moore**
From Hell, WildC.A.T.s



10 **Stefan Petrucha**
X-Files

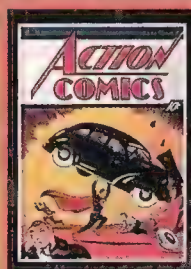
WIZARD'S TOP TEN HOTTEST ARTISTS AND WRITERS LISTS ARE DERIVED FROM A NATIONWIDE RETAILER SURVEY.

WIZARD'S UP & COMING CREATOR

DAVE TAYLOR

You may have seen this new artist's work on 1995's *Batman: Riddler—The Riddle Factory* one-shot and Marvel's *Force Works* series, and admired its bold edginess. You *will* see Taylor's work when he takes over the *Batman: Shadow of the Bat* series with issue #51 in April, after contributing to March's #50. His fresh, expressive perspective on comic book storytelling will assuredly bring him accolades.

WIZARD'S WINNER OF THE MONTH



WINNER

ACTION COMICS #1

The first appearance of Superman takes the prize for biggest price increase again this month, moving from $135,000 to $175,000. Yeow!

MARKET WATCHERS

Letters to the Price Guide

Dear Wizard,

I have issue #48 (August 1995). On page 155, it lists *Amazing Fantasy* #15 (Marvel, 1962), by Steve Ditko and Stan Lee, with 1&D: Spider-Man; 1: Aunt May; 1&D: Uncle Ben; 1: Flash Thompson; and 1: Burglar. It is priced at $20,600. Is this correct? Please advise.

Thank you.

Danny Richard

Jupiter, FL

It ain't correct anymore, Danny. *Amazing Fantasy* #15 now lists for $22,000 in Near Mint condition. I know what you're thinking: Can comic books really be worth this much money? Who would pay that kind of price for a comic? The answer is simple. Comics are most definitely worth this kind of money and more. *Amazing Fantasy* #15 is one of the world's most valuable comics, but certainly not the most valuable (*Action Comics* #1 holds that prize at $175,000 and moving up). Who pays that kind of dough? Rich people. At an auction held by Sotheby's in New York City (the folks that sell rare paintings for millions of dollars) someone shelled out $39,000 for a near-perfect copy of *Amazing Fantasy* #15. So, why don't we list it at $39,000? Because one person paying way over the going price doesn't make something worth that price to everyone else. Our price guide price is an average of what most people who have big bucks would be willing to pay.

Dear Market Watchers,

Is there any way to restore a totally screwed-up comic? If so, how much would it cost to restore a *Green Lantern* (second series) #76, worth $110, in horrible condition. It still has all the pages, staples and cover. I bought it for 25¢ at a garage sale.

Thanks.

Michael Cerrato

Jonesboro, AR

Yes, it is possible to restore a totally screwed up comic to pristo-primo condition, but it'll cost you hundreds of dollars to do it. So I don't think it would pay to have your *Green Lantern* #76 restored. Professional restorers can work miracles on old, tattered comics but they need to be really valuable to make it worth having the work done.

Which brings up another question: If you take a torn-up, dog-eared *Amazing Fantasy* #15 and pay a restorer to make it look like a Near Mint, brand-spanking-new copy, is it worth the Near Mint price in the price guide? If only things were that easy. Sorry, but the answer's no. A restored comic is worth a lot less than its unrestored counterpart, simply because it's not the original comic.

Dear Market Watchers,

I have a question that's been buggin' the you-know-what outta me. You know those pin-ups that are bound into comic books (most of the time in the centerfold)? If you tear them out and put them on your wall, is the value of the comic affected? I've been trying to get the answer to that question for the longest time, and nobody seems to know. Since you fellas over at *Wizard* are so knowledgeable, I figured you could answer it for me. Thanks for your time.

Corey Kahn

Pembroke Pines, FL

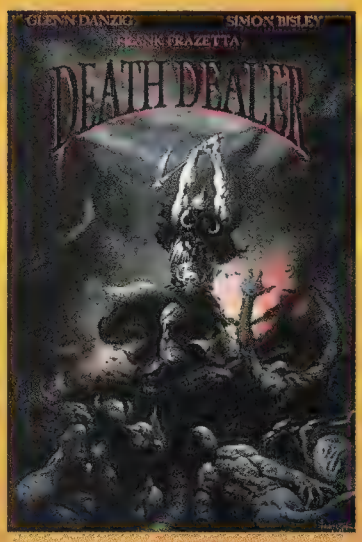
If you tear anything out of your comic book and hang it on the wall, the value of your book is...well...ruined. Think of it this way: Years from now when you go to sell that comic, someone's going to ask whether or not it is complete, and you will have to tell them that it's in perfect condition except you tore the centerfold out and hung it on your wall. They're gonna say: No thanks!

Dear Market Watchers,

First, let me say that I do not collect comics for their value. I do

scramble to restock: #2 to $65; #3 to $50; #4 to $35; #6 and #7 to $15; #8 to $12; and #9 doubled to $10.

• **Dawn**—Linsner's mini-series for his popular character from *Cry for Dawn* ranks as one of the hottest of the Bad Girl titles. Issue #1 moved up to $6; #1A (black light edition) to $25; #1B (look sharp edition) to $22.



Verotik's *Death Dealer* is reviving interest in creator Frank Frazetta's work.

• **Death Dealer**—Regional scarcity pushed up the price of this hot issue, moving #1 to $9. The cover by fantasy art legend (and Death Dealer creator) Frank Frazetta on this book is one factor in the rekindled interest for Frazetta's Golden Age work.

• **Double Impact**—China and Jazz are two more popular Bad Girls. Collectors continue to search out all issues, but a bit of price resistance caused some price drops this month. Issue #1 moved up to $9; #2A (nude cover edition in black bag) moved down to $20 on a price correction; #2B (silver bagged version) down to $30.

• **Evil Ernie**—The #1A Special Limited Edition from June 1992 hit the price guide for the first time at $50 this month. Issue #1 moved to $120 on reports of very strong demand; #2 up to $95; #3 to $65. *Evil Ernie: Resurrection* and *Evil Ernie: Revenge* also fall into the "hot" category.

• **From Hell**—Alan Moore and Eddie Campbell's continuing melodrama by Mad Love/Tundra moved up this month, but retailers report strong demand for the Mad Love/Kitchen Sink issues as well. The original #1 moved up to $12; #2 to $7. Keep an eye on this one, as there are plans to make a movie out of this hypothesized Jack the Ripper story.

• **Gen^{13}**—Continued strong demand ranks this as one of the hottest titles in the current market. Across-the-board increases for the five issues of the original mini-series this month; the regular series #1G (the Lin-GEN-re cover) and #1H (the GEN-et Jackson cover) moved up to $25, #2 moved up to $5.

• **Ghost in the Shell**—The manga market continues to attract more and more fans every day. Dark Horse's series ranks among the most popular, resulting in the following price increases: #1 to $7; #3 to $5.50; #4 and #5 to $4.50.

• **Hellina**—Riding the wave of "Bad Girl" popularity, *Hellina* #1 moved up to $6 this month.

• **I, Lucipher**—Before Sirius' *Poison Elves*, there was its precursor series *I, Lucipher*. This series from Mulehide Graphics is scarce *and* hot. Try finding any issues. Prices moved up as follows: #1 to $30; #2 to $25; #3 (scarcer) to $28; #4 and #5 to $20; #6 and #7 to $15.

• **Impulse**—A rising star, already hot and likely to get hotter because of funny stuff from writer Mark Waid and up-and-coming artist Humberto Ramos. Price increases this month: #1 to $4; #2 and #3 to $2.50; #4 and #5 to $2.

• **Lady Death**—The *Lingerie* leather edition debuted in this month's price guide at $75. In *Lady Death: Between Heaven and Hell*, the #4A Lady Demon variant debuted at $20. In the first

series, #1 moved down to $70 on the first signs of price resistance, while #1/2 moved up to $30; #1/2A (velvet version) moved up to $60; and #1/2B (Gold version) moved up to $50. Retailers are mixed on the current status of *Lady Death*, some say its demand has peaked, others are still reporting strong demand.

• **Lady Rawhide**—#1 moved up to $4.50; #2 to $3.50 this month.

• **The Maxx**—One of the top Image titles, *The Maxx* continues to burn up the sales charts, and the popularity of the MTV cartoon keeps bringing new customers into stores. Price increases this month: #1/2 to $12; #1/2A (Gold) to $23; #1 to $6; #4-#6 to $3.50; #7 and #8 to $4.50; #9 and #10 to $3.

• **Preacher**—Whoa, this series is on fire! Retailers everywhere are reporting this to be their new bestseller. Prices moved up as follows: #1 to $8; #2 and #3 to $6. Watch out!

Bad Girl to the extreme, is making *Satanika* hotter'n hellfire.

• **Razor**—*Razor Annual* #1, the first appearance of Shi, stayed at $42 this month, but is a quick-sell at that price. Issues that moved up in price: #2 to $20; #2A (limited edition) to $30; #3 to $20; #3A (limited edition) to $30; #4 to $12; #4A (limited edition) to $18.

• **Satanika**—Bad Girl is putting it too lightly for this hot series from Verotik. Prices are level this month, but retailers report strong demand.

• **Scud**—The small press' disposable assassin moved up again this month: #1 to $9; #2 and #3 to $6.

• **Shi**—Possibly *the* hottest of the Bad Girls at this juncture. Issue #1 moved up to $34; #2 to $20; #3 to $11; #4 (1st appearance of Tomoe!) to $7; #6 to $3. *Shi/Cyblade Special* moved up to $4.

• **Spawn**—Still the most popular (and hottest) Image title. Issue #9, the first appearance of Angela, moved *down* in price this month. Don't panic, the book is still very hot, but retailers informed us that we'd overshot the current market with the former price of $9.

• **Starman**—Retailers continue to report that demand for this popular DC series is almost at *Preacher* levels. Issue #1 moved up to $5.50; #0 to $5.

• **Star Wars**—The original Marvel series from 1977 posted strong gains this month, due to fan anticipation for the new movie trilogy which is still in a galaxy far, far away. Nonetheless, collectors are scarfing up issues at a frantic pace. Across-the-board increases this month.

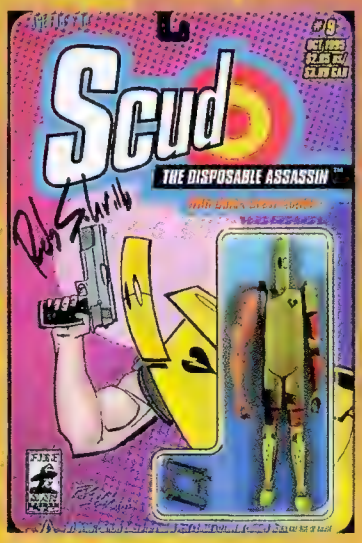
• **Vampirella #113**—The last issue in the Warren/Harris series is tough to find and in demand, according to retailers. Reports of as much as $75 have been coming in. Price moved up to $35 this month.

• **X-Files**—Starting to get mixed reports on this one, but the majority of retailers still report sizzling demand for this series. Issue #1 moved up to $44; #5 through #8 inched up as well.

• **X-Men Alpha**—Prices appear to have peaked for the time being. Issue #1A (gold version) dropped to $45 this month.

• **X-Men Omega**—Price remains at $7.50, stable at this level.

• **X-Men Prime**—Price remains at $8, demand is stable. W



Scud's rising popularity shows that even a disposable robot is valuable.

Jon Warren likes coffee and donuts. Mmmmm, tastey.

look forward to seeing whether or not my handful of valuable comics will go up in price each month, but this is because I like to feel good about my collection—not because I would ever sell them.

And now, my question: Will my new hobby of taking comics to conventions to get them signed actually decrease their value? Is a comic signed without certification just another form of mutilation?

Even if this is true, I won't stop getting them signed. They may be ruined to a buyer, but they will still fill me with memories and the kind of pride I think many collectors have forgotten about.

Jason Hubbell
Utica, OH

To answer your first question, in the case of expensive comics ($100 or more), it is possible that the signature would actually decrease the value of the book, because in many collectors' opinions, it's been decided that it is a form of impairment. In the case of less-expensive books, $5 and under, the price will always be higher for a signed book. Look for our inaugural autograph price guide this issue on page 193 and check out the latest values of the top creators in the industry. To answer your question about certification, it's a double-edged sword. Many legitimate retailers sell authentic signed books without all kinds of certificates. If you are buying books without a certificate, a few tell-tale signs that a signature may not be kosher is if a retailer has many copies of the same creator, if he is selling the signatures way too cheap (like a Todd McFarlane-signed *Spawn* book for $3), or if the retailer won't honor a money back guarantee, at least for a specified amount of time. Many retailers have their own certificates of authenticity, and these are only as good as the retailer who is selling you the books. Remember, if he can forge a signature, he sure as hell can forge a certificate. This is a very small portion of all autographs around, but there are services available that have artists sign books. They are guaranteed to be authentic by placing them sealed in a special bag or with a special seal, but you will usually have to pay a premium for this because of all the effort and time involved.

Time to say goodbye, fellow Market Watchers. Keep those letters coming and be sure to wash your hands before handling your comics (no telling where you've had those things).

—Jon Warren
The Market Watcher

We can't print all the letters we get, so if you want an answer to your question, please send a self-addressed stamped envelope. We still can't guarantee an answer, but we'll do the best we can.

Send 'em to:

Market Watchers
c/o Jon Warren
P. O. Box 2512
Chattanooga, TN 37409
Or send e-mail directly to the guru himself: JonRWarren@aol.com

Bad Girls of WIZARD®

WANTED

PSYLOCKE™

AVENGELYNE™

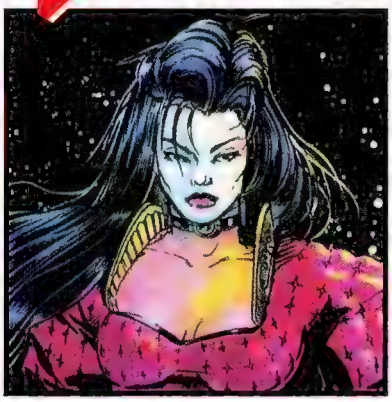
RAZOR™

DAWN™

LADY DEATH™

BARB WIRE™

ANGELA™


SHI™

VAMPIRELLA®

REWARD:

The hottest **Wizard Special** ever, including a Lady Death/Shi/Vampirella jam poster and a preview of Pamela Anderson's *Barb Wire* movie. On sale in December.

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bullpen

VOTE RIGHT!

You might still be thinking about voting in the huge Marvel/DC battle...and odds are you're wrong. In the megacrossover, which just started, the two giant companies are opening up the five biggest battles to the fans. You vote as to the outcome, the companies tally the score and you get a majority-vote storyline. The problem is, too many people are voting for who they *want* to win, not for who they think *should* win. Yeah, Wolverine is the most popular hero on the planet, but no way could he take Lobo in a fight. Batman? Each of his monthly titles outsells Cap's one title, but no way could Bats knock him out. See what we're saying? Vote for who you think would win in a fight, not just for the guy with the number one book. And do it fast—December 31's the big deadline!

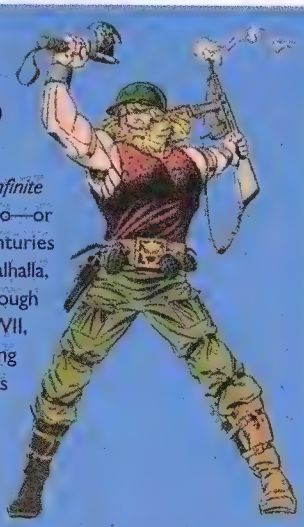
LIVE, FROM NEW YORK...

At least he didn't get naked. When *Wizard* Contributing Editor Marc Wilkofsky attended a taping of the Tempestt Bledsoe talk show, little did he know of the apocalyptic chain of events about to be set in motion. Y'see, the TV staff circulated a flyer to the audience for an upcoming blind-date-themed show, and our dignified editor eagerly signed his name Marc "I'll take anyone" Wilkofsky. *sigh* When the producers saw that, Marc was instantly picked, was set up on a blind date and appeared as a guest the following week. So...how'd it go? Well, the chick didn't dig Marc, even after he boogied his way on stage, but the audience thought he was a cute little guy and the producers invited him back for a second show—something they rarely do. The topic? "Muscle men vs. wimps." (Marc being the main wimp.) Anyway, after taking the stage to the theme of "Rocky," the tank top-wearing Marc insulted the muscleheads, posed 'em down, spoke up for sensitive guys everywhere and, as host Tempestt (who played Vanessa on "The Cosby Show") said at the show's end, "He taught us it's what's inside that counts." Ummm...like self-respect?

WHAT ANNOYED US THIS MONTH

Blonde? Peter/Ben/whoever dyed his hair *blonde?!?* Geez, just when we were sure Marvel couldn't make Spider-Man a less appealing character, the "House of Ideas" proves us wrong again. Ah well, at least we have *Untold Tales of Spidey*, the *only* current Spidey book done right, to keep us happy.

MORT OF THE MONTH (it's back!)



The Viking Commando? Let's hear it for *Crisis on Infinite Earths* for getting rid of this dillweed. The Commando—or Valoric, as his friends called him—fell in battle centuries ago, and when a Valkyrie attempted to bring him to Valhalla, she learned he was still alive and instead took him through a time warp (Got that?). Arriving in the midst of WWII, Vike whipped the bejeezus outta some Nazis, catching the attention of some Americans, who recruited his Nordic ass and—the rest is...depressing.

MORT-O-METER: HHHHHHHIIII

CHECK LIST

InQuest #10

Wa-hooo! In our first double-digit issue, *InQuest* gets all hot under the collar with a titillating **female mummy cover** by acclaimed fantasy artist **Fred Fields!** Then try and keep up as we run full tilt with a **super-in-depth Boris Vallejo interview**, fan-made *Magic* cards, the top 10 mean-spirited *Magic* tips, a special step-by-step "How to mummify something" presentation and a whole lot more!

Other neat crap includes **free *Middle-earth: The Wizards, Highlander* and *Doomtrooper* game cards**, a chance to win one of everything related to J.R.R. Tolkien's Middle-earth setting and **a complete set of the new *Star Wars CCG!*** So cool it'll tighten your belly button, and only **$3.99!**

CONTEST WINNERS

These are the swingin' Grand Prize winners to several past *Wizard* contests. Congrats, folks!

GREEN GOBLIN, ISSUE #49

All 26 of Toy Biz's five-inch Spider-Man action figures go to the lucky Christopher Mendoza of San Diego, Calif.! We and the Marvel people thought his Green Goblin get-up (pictured right here) was the ginchiest—go, Christopher!

MORTAL KOMBAT, #49

Anthony Tarpley of Tomball, Texas will be the envy of all his neighbors—and you *Wizard* readers—'cause he won an official, killer *Mortal Kombat 3* arcade game. Flawless finish, Anthony!

MISSING LINK, #48

Dominic Miller of Phoenix, Ariz., is the winner this time around! The connection between *Alpha Flight* #10, *Godzilla* #17 and *Green Lantern* (vol. 2) #87 is that they each feature a superhero out of costume! (Not too tough this time, huh?) You win an ultraspiffy *Captain America* #110, Dominic—congrats!

next month

TOP TEN

Top ten characters who missed being in the Legion of Super-Heroes by "this much":

10) Gummy Boy
9) Big Jugs Lass
8) Imploding Reindeer Lad
7) Love Handles Lad
6) Cheryl Ladd
5) Fetch Me Some Coffee, Boy!
4) Corpse Kid
3) Egg Fluff Donut Fart-Lad
2) Lad Lass
1) Keep-Squeezin'-Them-Monkeys Lad

C.B.I.Q. ANSWERS

1. B	6. A	11. C	16. C
2. D	7. D	12. A	17. C
3. C	8. D	13. A	18. A
4. C	9. B	14. D	19. C
5. B	10. B	15. B	20. C

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WIZARD profile

Here's looking at...

BART SEARS

Bart Sears has managed to carve out a fairly successful career in comics. But for Sears, currently plying his trade on Acclaim Comics' *X-O Manowar*, it has not always been a marriage made in Heaven. "It's fairly frustrating," concedes the 32-year-old artist, whose demeanor, owing to a recent bout with the flu, is a bit on the cynical side. "I see so much that can be on each page and panel. It's tough to get everything in and do things the way I want to do them. I always end up compromising; every day is a battle. But I love the stories and the graphic form, and so I keep coming back."

Sears, born in Ithaca, N.Y., and raised in Syracuse, got into comics at age nine and made the most of the deal by visiting the store around the corner from his home. "Every Friday I would go around the corner to the local store and buy comics without covers for 20 for $1. I hoarded a lot of books that way."

Comics gave way to an interest in "film, animation and things like that," which led to Sears being faced with a tough post-high school decision. "I had to decide between the USC film school, The Challenge to the Arts School for film and animation, and The Joe Kubert School of Cartoon and Graphic Art. The Kubert School was the only one of the three that did not require an essay to get in, so I took the lazy route. But I dropped out in my second year. I was burned out. I couldn't raise a pencil to do diddly."

Sears paid some nasty dues for six months moving furniture before working up some samples that got him a short-lived gig at Marvel Comics, doing some stories for *Savage Tales* that never saw print. He moved to Pied Piper/Prospect for his first published work on *Hero Alliance*. "I stupidly took that book, but I quickly found out that I couldn't deal with the pressure of monthly deadlines. That experience drove me out of comics, but I hooked up with Hasbro and ended up designing G.I. Joe figures for a year. I started a family about that time and needed extra cash, so I started doing covers for TSR and a couple of Conan portfolios."

Sears eventually found himself back in comics, this time at DC, where he did the likes of *C.O.P.S.* #3 and #4, the final issue of *Invasion!*, practically the first two years' worth of *Justice League Europe* and a three-issue arc on *Batman: Legends of the Dark Knight* (#21-#23). A falling out with DC led to Sears moving to Valiant for *X-O Manowar* #14 and #15, and *Turok* #1 and #2. Then he penciled the first two issues of Image's *Violator* mini-series before returning to *X-O* on a regular basis last March with issue #44, sharing penciling duties with his studiomate Andy Smith.

"It's a battle," says Sears of his constant creative frontal assaults on the paneled page. "Sometimes you win. Sometimes you lose. Fortunately, I seem to win more often than not."

First comic read...

The first one I remember was a Neal Adams Batman book. It was one of those 100-pagers.

Favorite comic of all time...

I always liked it when Jack Kirby drew *Thor*.

Favorite work of your own...

I don't have one. I generally hate most of what I do.

Comics you currently read...

Nothing regularly. When Frank Miller does a new *Sin City*, I'll get that.

Favorite comic book character...

The standard ones. The Batmans. The Captain Americas.

The one person you'd like to meet...

Special effects legend Ray Harryhausen

Superpower you would most want...

Flight

Nicknames you have...

Not a lot of pleasant ones.

Stuff you collect...

I collect nothing, really.

Favorite munchie at 2 a.m....

Chocolate ice cream

Favorite cartoon...

Batman: The Animated Series

Last good book you read...

The Prey series, by John Sanford

Last good movie you saw...

Rob Roy

Person who would play you in a movie about yourself...

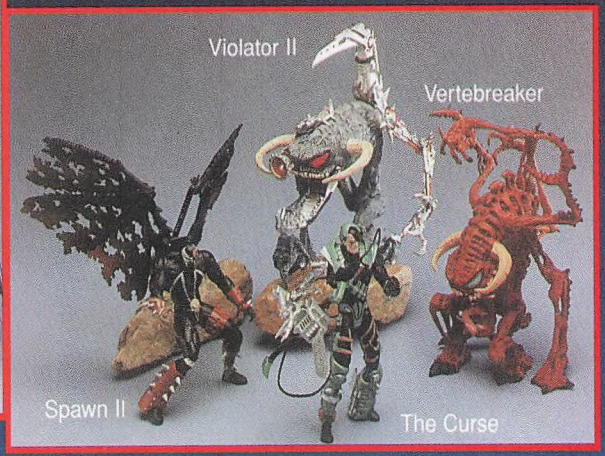
Charlie Brown

If you had the power of The Beyonder...

I would like to live forever.

by Marc Shapiro

THE TOYS ARE HERE



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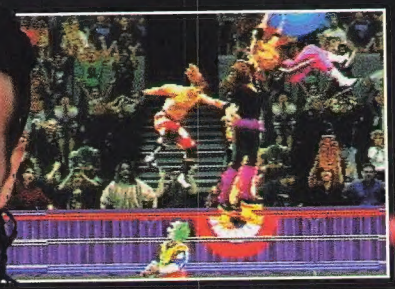

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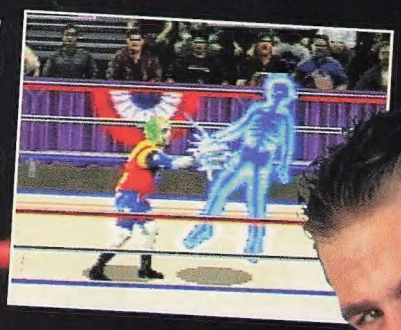

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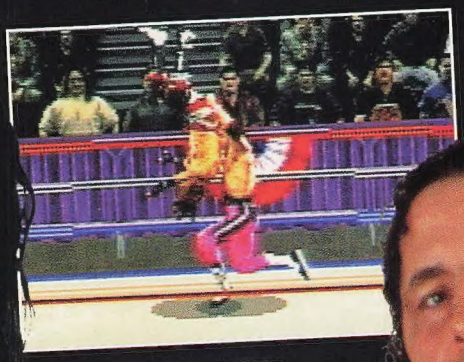

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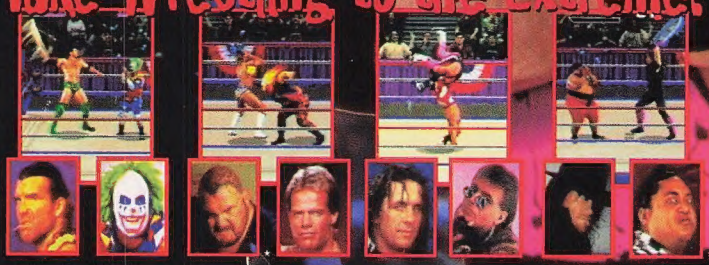

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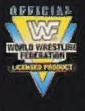

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* Bam Bam Bigelow and Yokozuna are not on Super Nes.